

establishing **a baseline**

A Report on the State of Education in the District of Columbia

June 2004



ANTHONY A. WILLIAMS
MAYOR

Dear Readers:

These are exciting and challenging times for public education in the United States. The federal No Child Left Behind Act, with its exacting requirements for accountability, has focused attention on public education as never before. Those same requirements for accountability call for information about school performance that is reliable, comparable, current, and easily understood.

Unlike most states, the District of Columbia has no central repository for information about education in the city and no single entity with responsibility for analyzing and reporting on the status of education in the District. Data are held in numerous offices of organizations and individuals. Information is collected at different times for different purposes, using different methodologies and different definitions. Because data are not comparable, it is difficult to use what has been collected to identify citywide trends or patterns. This report by the State Education Office of the District of Columbia is an important initial step toward correcting this situation.

Some of you may not be familiar with the State Education Office of the District of Columbia (SEO). It is a relatively new organization, created by the Council in July 2000 as a part of the Executive Office of the Mayor (D.C. Act 13-387), to carry out certain state-level education functions and to study the feasibility of assuming others.

In recent years the system of public education in the District of Columbia has undergone significant change. In addition to the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), from which many Washingtonians graduated, the city now has 43 public charter schools. In short, our system of public education has become much more diverse and complex as the challenges it faces become even more persistent.

As a city we must begin to have a better understanding of what is happening in all of our elementary and secondary schools and why. So much depends upon the capacity of schools to keep up with the demands of the 21st century. Standardized data requirements, as well as the analyses and organization of information about education into formats that we can easily understand are essential for accountability purposes. This report, *The State of Education in the District of Columbia: Establishing a Baseline*, while not exhaustive, represents an important beginning.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anthony A. Williams". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Anthony Williams
Mayor,
District of Columbia

Dear Readers:

As many of you are aware, my tenure as Superintendent of the District of Columbia Public Schools and Chief State School Officer began in September 2004. Since my arrival, I have been encouraged by the numbers of people in every corner of this community who are committed to providing excellent public education for the children of the District of Columbia and who believe that this goal is well within the capability of this city.

In order to ensure that we move toward our goals in a strategic manner, we must fully understand the needs of the students that we serve, the current level of student performance, and the availability of financial, physical and human resources to support our work. This report, *The State of Education in the District of Columbia: Establishing a Baseline*, provides data that are crucial to our assessment of student needs and the overall educational needs of our community. Equally important, the information contained in the report provides context for our endeavors as we set new goals and priorities, acknowledging accomplishments and milestones, and defining the many challenges facing public education.

It is my hope that you will share this report with your colleagues, peers, friends, neighbors and associates, and that the report will facilitate the necessary dialogue among those who must work together if we are to succeed. Once we have established high expectations and the very highest standards and curriculum for *every student* and *every public education enterprise*, significant improvement will require sustained partnerships with government agencies, corporations, foundations, community-based organizations and the greater community, each of whom must make a long-term commitment to quality public education.

I commend Ms. Deborah Gist and staff of the State Education Office, and those whose contributions have made this document possible, for this outstanding product. As we work toward our goals, it is my expectation that we will continue to share and disseminate education data that will guide our decisions, benchmark our success, and inform the public of our progress and performance. We have much to look forward to as we, together, ensure that a high quality public education for every child becomes the gold standard for the school district that is home to our nation's capital.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clifford B. Janey', with a stylized, flowing script.

Clifford B. Janey, Ed.D
Superintendent
Chief State School Officer

The State of Education in the District of Columbia: Establishing a Baseline

is the first in a proposed series of reports on the status of education in the District of Columbia to be issued triennially by the State Education Office of the District of Columbia. This report focuses on the performance and progress of the District's public elementary and secondary schools, both traditional and charter. Much of the report is keyed to the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). To the extent possible, subsequent reports will include information on private and parochial elementary and secondary schools in the District of Columbia.

The idea for this report was born more than three years ago, when staff of the State Education Office (SEO) found there was no single source for information about education in the District of Columbia. This report represents our attempt to create a "fact book" about education in the District that could be periodically updated, expanded to include additional significant indicators, and eventually used to track education trends and patterns in our city.

Wherever possible and appropriate, prior year data are used to establish trends and to build baselines for longitudinal comparisons. *The State of Education in the District of Columbia: Establishing a Baseline* also includes information about how public education in the District compares with that in other similar jurisdictions. The report was not prepared as an evaluation of public education in the District of Columbia; instead, the State Education Office has attempted to present information in a manner that you, the reader, can use to reach your own opinion about the performance of the District's public education system.

The report is divided into six chapters. Each chapter contains both qualitative and quantitative information on specific indicators. The relationships among these indicators tell a powerful story about public education in the District of Columbia.

Chapter I. Our Children and Their Families

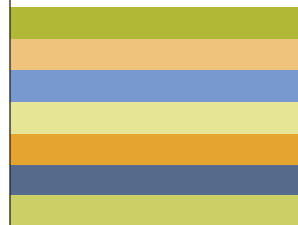
Who our children are, their racial and ethnic heritage, where they live, with whom they live, the educational attainment and income levels of their families, and opportunities and resources in their communities.

Chapter II. Our Students and Their Schools

Student demographics and enrollment, types of schools, curricula, and facilities.

Chapter III. Our Teachers and School Leaders

Qualifications, preparation, recruitment, and retention.



Chapter IV. Student Outcomes

Overall student performance, trends, performance on districtwide standardized tests and the NAEP, and progress toward meeting NCLB requirements.

Chapter V. Financing Our Schools

Sources of funds, funding levels, distribution of funds, and expenditures.

Chapter VI. Taking Stock

Strengths to build upon.

In preparing this report, the SEO relied upon several sources for advice and information: the D.C. Board of Education, the District of Columbia Public Schools, public charter schools, the D.C. Public Charter School Board, and numerous organizations and individuals with an interest and stake in the quality of elementary and secondary education in the District. We found that data for many indicators of performance that should be included in a report such as *The State of Education in the District of Columbia: Establishing a Baseline* were either not available or not comparable. Consequently, this first report is missing data on significant performance indicators. We expect that subsequent reports in this series will benefit from current DCPS and charter school initiatives to increase the scope and reliability of education information that is collected and reported in the District.

I want to acknowledge and express gratitude to the many individuals who willingly and enthusiastically gave us their assistance and support in preparing this report. First, I would like to acknowledge the vision and leadership of Connie Spinner, the previous State Education Officer, who, through her commitment to this project, enabled the SEO to produce this important report. Second, I want to thank those individuals who took time from busy schedules to talk with us, at length, about aspects of the report, to answer the many questions we had, to assist in the analysis of data, and to provide us with data sources and documents. Third, I am grateful to and especially proud of the SEO's Policy Research and Analysis staff, who took on this project in addition to their ever-increasing workloads and produced this first report. Finally, the SEO staff and I owe a special thanks to the individual experts and stakeholders who adhered to impossible timelines to read and critique drafts of the report.

Deborah Gist
Interim State Education Officer

Acknowledgments

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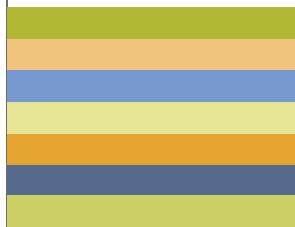


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Highlights

Chapter I

- The District of Columbia's population has been steadily declining for several years. Population losses are due, almost entirely, to the replacement of families by single adults and couples without children.
- The racial and ethnic composition of the city varies significantly across wards.
- The city's population is almost evenly spread across eight wards, however, the distribution of children varies significantly. Nearly 40 percent of the city's children live in Wards 7 and 8.
- Nearly one in five District residents lives in poverty. This rate is higher for children; nearly one in three of the city's children lives in poverty.
- Over half of the city's poor children live in Wards 7 and 8.
- The District of Columbia leads the nation in the availability, accessibility, and quality of early care and early childhood education programs.

Chapter II

- Public school students in the District of Columbia are predominantly Black and predominantly poor, particularly in Wards 7 and 8.
- Public schools in the District of Columbia enroll less than half the number of students that attended school here in 1970.
- The quality of a high school curriculum has a pronounced impact on college degree completion, particularly for Black and Latino students.
- The maintenance, renovation, and acquisition of school buildings represent some of the most pressing issues facing public education in the District of Columbia.

Chapter III

- The quality of a teacher has a stronger influence on student achievement than do factors such as poverty or race. In September 2003, the DCPS reported that 74.6 percent of teachers were highly qualified under the guidelines set by the federal government. This percentage is 65.4 percent for teachers in high-poverty schools.
- A teacher's content knowledge and experience are linked to his or her effectiveness. Between 1994 and 2000, the percentage of math teachers with a major in their field increased, while the percentage of English teachers with a major in their field declined substantially.
- DCPS and charter school principals have the authority to choose the curriculum for the school.
- The DCPS has 167 schools, each headed by a principal. During the past three years, approximately 100 principals have left their jobs.

Chapter IV

- Scores of 4th and 8th grade students on a national standardized test have increased significantly in both reading and math over the last five years. However, the scores of the District's 4th and 8th graders are still lower than those of students in the nine other urban districts who participated in the comparison, with one exception. Eighth graders in the District of Columbia score higher in reading than 8th graders in Los Angeles.
- Despite efforts to improve achievement for all students, there is a significant gap between the achievement of students in different demographic groups. The gap is

largest between students in different racial and ethnic categories; in 4th, 8th, and 11th grade reading and math, White students have an average NCE score that is at least 25 points higher than any of their Black or Hispanic counterparts.

- In response to the federal NCLB legislation, the D.C. Board of Education established performance goals in reading and mathematics in 2003 for all students attending public schools. Of the 151 schools for which school year 2002–03 reports are available, 83 (55 percent) fell below the 2003 intermediate goal on at least one measure, and thus failed to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress under NCLB.
- As part of an effort to promote college attendance, increasing numbers of DCPS students are taking the Scholastic Assessment Tests (SAT) and Advanced Placement tests.
- An estimated 65.2 percent of students entering the 9th grade in DCPS will obtain a high school diploma in four years, given

the conditions prevailing in DCPS during the 2000–01 school year. This rate is higher than those of all nine urban school districts that participated in a comparison.

- Between 1998 and 2002, the number of DC high school graduates who enrolled for the first time in a college or university has increased by 28 percent.

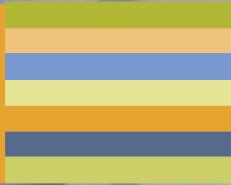
Chapter V

- District residents last year spent approximately \$913 million in operating funds to educate the city's children.
- During the past several years, funding for public elementary and secondary education has increased significantly.
- The District of Columbia ranks high nationally and among neighboring districts in annual per-pupil expenditures for public elementary and secondary education.
- Student instruction accounts for the largest portion of expenditures for both DCPS and public charter schools.



CHAPTER ONE

our children and their families



***“It is easier to build strong children
than to repair broken men.”***

— *Frederick Douglass*

Washington, D.C. — the capital of the United States and the free world—has a rich and distinctive history. The city is known to its residents as the “District,” and has long enjoyed a reputation for offering economic and educational opportunities, particularly to those seeking respite from poverty, racism, or political and social persecution. It is the hometown of thousands of families who have lived here for generations. Many others have come to live in the city to study, to work, or simply to make better lives for themselves in a new place. The children of the many families who call the District home represent a multiplicity of cultures and speak a variety of languages.

This opening chapter of the report discusses the racial and ethnic heritage of the District’s adult and youth populations, where they live, their family dynamics, educational attainment, and some indicators of economic and personal well-being. It includes a look at juvenile crime statistics as well as an analysis of circumstances that may place children

and their families “at risk.” It concludes with a discussion of positive factors that promote successful outcomes, such as strong early learning programs and out-of-school programs.

This chapter uses data from the U.S. Census; reports that analyze issues concerning the District, such as the DC Agenda *Issue Scan* and *Every Kid Counts in the District of Columbia*; and excerpts and articles from related research studies to describe the children and families who call the District of Columbia their home.

The Demographics of Age, Race, and Economic Status

The 2000 Census reports 572,822 people living in the District of Columbia. Census figures also show that the city’s population has declined every year between 1990 and 2000. The number of children is decreasing even more rapidly than the general population. In its most recent edition of *Every Kid Counts in the District of Columbia*, the D.C. Kids Count Collaborative estimated that 112,128 children lived in the District in July 2002, a decrease of 2,864 children from the 2000 total of 114,992. **The authors attributed the population loss almost entirely to the replacement of families by single adults and couples without children.** “Over the long run,” the Collaborative reports, “the capital city seems unlikely to grow substantially unless it can attract more families with children.”

The racial and ethnic composition of the city’s adults differs from that of its children. Black residents constitute 56 percent of the adult population, and make up 75 percent of the city’s children. Thirty-five percent of the city’s adults are White, but White children make up only 15 percent of the youth population. The city’s Latino residents, who may also identify themselves as White or Black, make up nearly 10 percent of the adult and youth populations.¹ Asian residents make up nearly 3 percent of the adult population and 1.5 percent of the youth



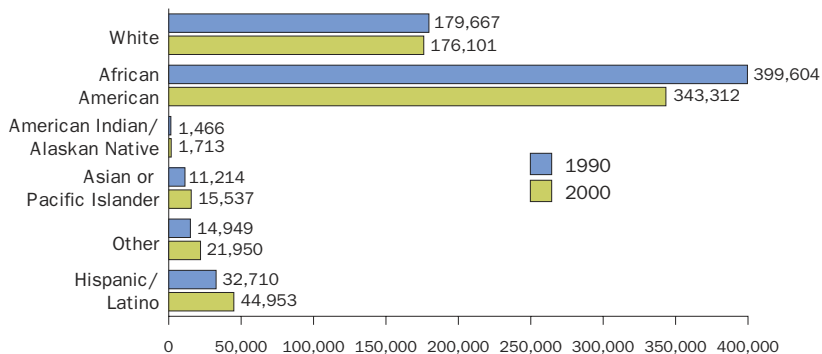
population and American Indians and Pacific Islanders represent 0.4 percent of both the adult and youth populations.

The census data, as displayed in Exhibit 1, reveal significant population shifts in the racial and ethnic makeup of the population in the District of Columbia between 1990 and 2000. During the 10-year span between 1990 and 2000, census data indicate that the number of District residents who identified themselves as Latino, most of whom are of Latin American origin, increased by 37 percent. Again, based on limitations in the data, these figures may not reveal the current state of the Latino population increase. At the same time, the District showed a 46.8 percent increase in the number of individuals who identified themselves as being “some other race,” and an increase of 38 percent in the Asian population. From 1990 to 2000, the District’s total population decreased by 34,841 residents with the greatest decline among Blacks (a decrease of 14 percent), followed by Whites (a decrease of 2 percent).

The District’s metro area had the 9th highest per capita income of any metro area in the nation in 2000, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce. In that year, the District’s per capita income was \$28,659, which is more than 30 percent higher than the U.S. average.² **At the same time, the District’s metro area ranked 8th of 102 metro areas for the greatest increase in poverty rates between 1990 and 2000.** In 2000, one out of five District residents lived below the poverty line.³

Exhibit 1: District of Columbia Population by Race/Ethnicity, 1990 and 2000

The racial and ethnic composition of the District changed dramatically between 1990 and 2000. Every racial and ethnic group captured in census data experienced an increase in population, with the exception of Black and White residents. The number of Black residents decreased significantly over the past 10 years.



Data Source: DC Agenda Neighborhood Information Service.

This report relies on data from multiple sources, which often use different definitions and labels for racial and ethnic categories. Exhibits in this report use the same categories as the source from which the data came. Because the majority of citizens in the District of Columbia who identify themselves as “Hispanic” are from Central America, South America, or the Caribbean, the narrative uses the term “Latino” when referring to people in this group. With respect to the term “Black,” this term is used to include African American as well as Black people of other ethnic ancestries.

The citywide demographics of age, race, and economic status vary dramatically across the city’s eight wards, as shown in Exhibit 2. Although ward populations are similar in size, the size of the youth population from birth to age 17 differs greatly among wards. For example, census data show that youths make up only 8 percent of the total population in Ward 2. Similarly, youths

How One Local School Met the Changing Needs of the Community

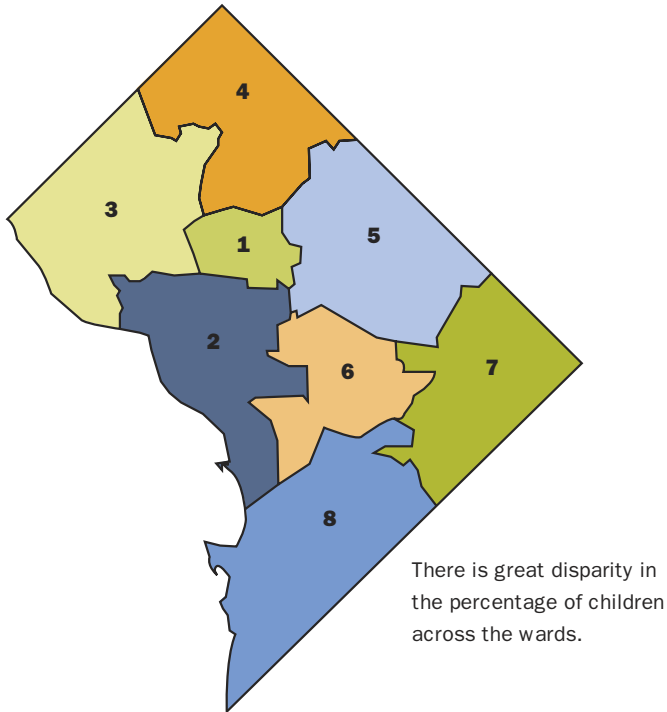
The 2000 Census reports roughly a 146 percent increase in the Latino population in Ward 4 alone—bringing the number of Latino residents in that ward from 2,228 to 5,484 over a 10-year period. Many neighborhoods and communities are responding to the dramatic shift in the population by increasing services and resources to meet the changing needs of their residents.

Parents and teachers at Brightwood Elementary School in Ward 4 have come together to address the challenge. Of the 463 students at Brightwood Elementary School, 75 percent

are Latino, 18 percent are Black and 7 percent are Ethiopian. Wanda Fox, the school’s principal, has provided resources to aid the school community by instituting formal bilingual instruction in Head Start through 2nd grade and informal language arts classes in 5th grade. She has hired a bilingual assistant principal, two bilingual counselors, 10 English-as-a second-language teachers and bilingual education aides. Schoolwide meetings now have translators, and about half of the PTA’s executive council is now Latino. The school also publishes a bilingual newsletter for parents.

Sources: *The Washington Post*, Nov. 2, 2003; District of Columbia Office of Planning

Exhibit 2: Population of District Children by Ward, 2000

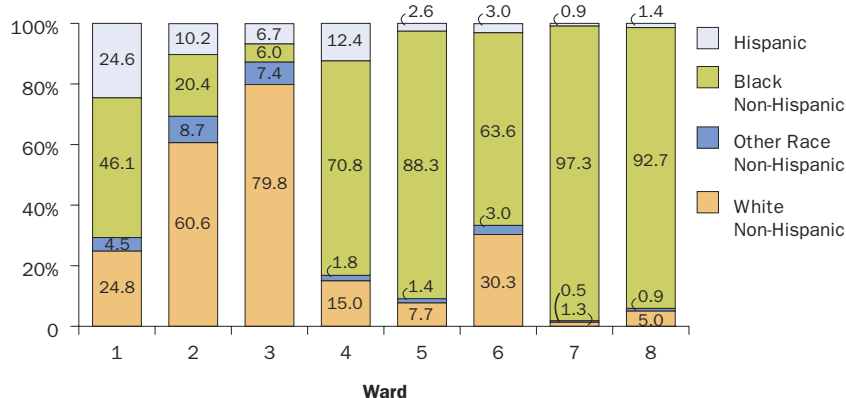


Ward	Total Population	Youth Population	Youth Population %
1	73,364	13,102	18%
2	68,869	5,513	8%
3	73,718	8,817	12%
4	74,092	15,691	21%
5	72,527	15,328	21%
6	68,035	11,657	17%
7	70,540	19,420	27%
8	70,914	25,464	36%
Total	572,822	114,992	20%

Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Exhibit 3: Racial and Ethnic Composition by Ward, 2000

There are significant differences in racial composition across wards in the District.



Note: Some percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.
Data Source: DC Agenda Neighborhood Information Service

account for only 12 percent of the residents in Ward 3. In contrast, 36 percent of the residents in Ward 8 and 27 percent of the residents in Ward 7 are children. As we discuss the state of education in the District, insight into this data helps us to understand where the children are so that city services may be focused to serve the children where they live.

Exhibit 3 demonstrates that the racial and ethnic composition also differs from one ward to another. While only 6 percent of the population in Ward 3 are Black. Black residents make up more than 97 percent of the population in Ward 7.

Additionally, wealth is unevenly distributed across the city, as shown in Exhibit 4. **Poverty is concentrated in many neighborhoods that also have the largest youth populations.** As a result, poverty disproportionately affects the city's young people. "Although children under 18 make up only 20 percent of the city's population, they make up more than 30 percent of the city's population living in poverty."⁴ Between 1990 and 2000, the number of children in poverty grew in every ward.⁵ By 2000, more than one in three children living in wards 1, 6, 7, and 8 lived below the poverty line. In Ward 2, the number of children in poverty decreases to one in four and in Ward 4, to one in six.

Risk Factors Associated with Poverty

Growing up in a neighborhood that has a high concentration of poverty may place a child at higher risk of lower academic achievement, becoming a teen parent, getting involved in crime, earning lower wages, and being employed less frequently. "The problems associated with poverty are magnified in these neighborhoods, which are generally characterized by low educational attainment, single-parent households, and high crime rates."⁶

Across the city in 2000, poverty was highest in areas where the level of education

was the lowest. Among District residents 25 and older, 83 percent held at least a high school diploma. Thirty-nine percent of the District's residents had earned a bachelor's degree or higher. The percentage of residents who have postsecondary degrees varies greatly among wards, and census figures show that there is an inverse correlation between the percent of people with a college education and the percent of people living in poverty. (See Exhibit 5).

Of the 114,992 children recorded by the census, only one-third, or 37,532 children, live in married-couple families. This data is presented in Exhibit 6. The largest share, two out of every five children, live with a single mother. Nearly 15 percent of the District's children live with grandparents, and 5 percent live with a single father. Five percent live with another relative, such as an aunt or cousin.

There is a strong correlation between the number of children living in poverty and the number of children living with single mothers. Almost 38 percent of single-mother families in the District live in poverty. When families headed by all single females, such as those headed by grandmothers or aunts, are included, the poverty rate climbs to 46 percent.⁷

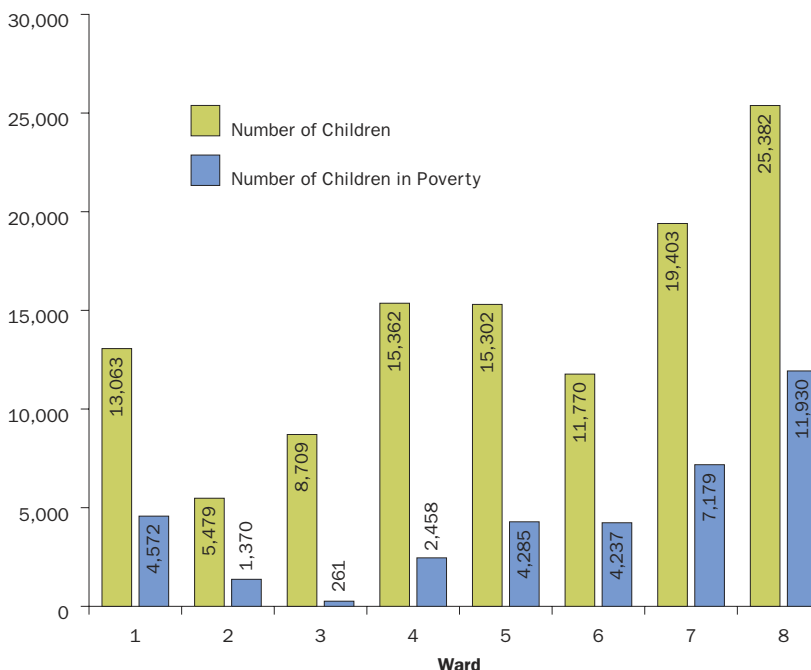
Kids Count research suggests that a higher percentage of the District's children are living in "high risk" families than the national rate.⁸ Factors that are associated with risk include the percentage of children living in low-income working families (27 percent), the percentage of children living with a household head who is a high school dropout (30 percent), the percentage of teens not attending school and not working, ages 16–19 (12 percent), and the percentage of teens who are high school dropouts (13 percent). In all but one of these areas, the District's percentage was equal to or higher than the national average.

DC Agenda's Issue Scan raises the following key issues for consideration when evaluating where services should be focused to improve outcomes for our children:

Exhibit 4: Poverty and the City's Young

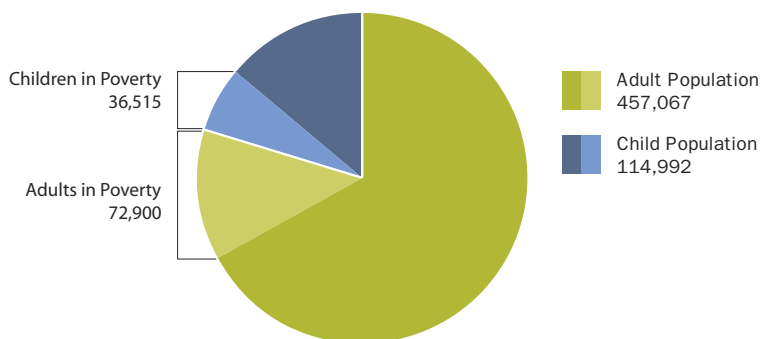
Children account for about 20 percent of the District of Columbia's total population, but make up more than 30 percent of the city's residents living in poverty. In addition, there are dramatic variations in childhood poverty across different wards of the city.

POVERTY AND THE CITY'S YOUNG



Data Source: DC Agenda 2004 Issue Scan.

YOUTH AND ADULT POPULATION, 2001



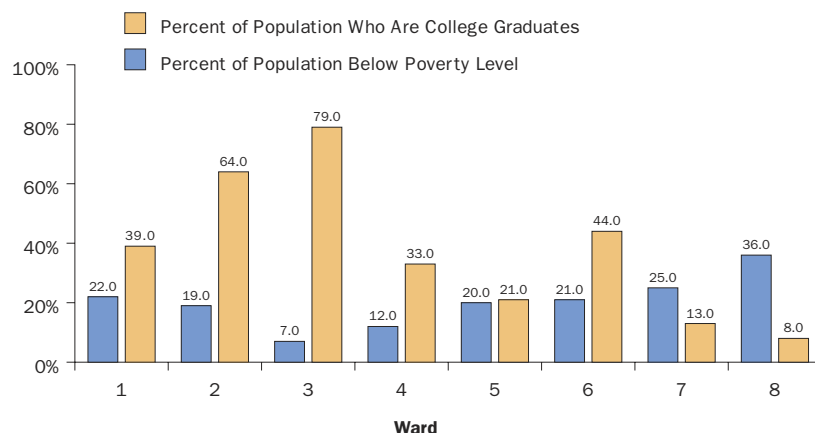
Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau

"An estimated 46,000 District youth, between the ages of 5 and 17, were left unsupervised during after-school hours. The arrest rate for violent crime by youth age 10 to 17 was almost double the rate of other large cities. ...The death rate by accident, homicide or suicide per 1,000 teens ages 15 to 19 was almost three times the national average. ...On any given day, nearly half of young African American men in the District are in prison or jail, or on probation, parole or pretrial release."⁹



Exhibit 5: Relationship Between Poverty and Education Levels in the District of Columbia, by Ward, 2000

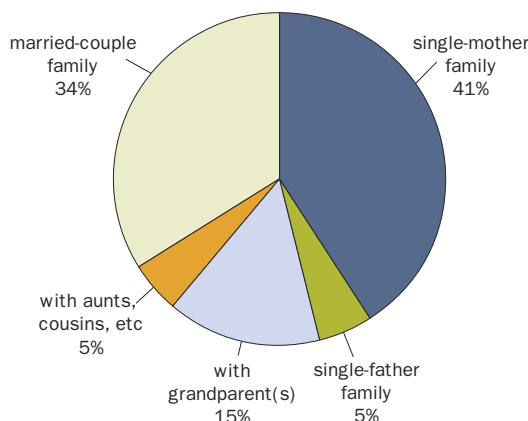
The percentage of residents who have postsecondary degrees varies greatly among wards. Levels of poverty are highest where levels of education are lowest.



Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Exhibit 6: Children Under 18 by Family Type, 2000

Two out of three children in the District of Columbia do not live in a married-couple family.



Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

A recent report released by the Urban Institute indicates that the level of arrests for violent crimes among juveniles had been decreasing since 1996—until this year. “The number of juvenile arrests for violent crime dropped 52 percent between 1995 and 2003, from 641 to 307,” the report notes. “While violent crime arrests grew somewhat between 2002 and 2003, the level of violent juvenile crime is still low relative to 1995.”¹⁰

Resources for Child and Youth Development

While this chapter has presented challenges that can limit the prospects for our children, there is evidence that poverty and other risk factors need not be predictors of a child’s ability to succeed. In the District, many programs and organizational resources provide support and strong early development and educational experiences for children considered to be in circumstances of high risk.

One notable opportunity for District children is the abundance of strong early education programs that allow children to get a healthy educational start by attending schools or child-development centers long before they enter kindergarten. The District has a higher availability of child-development centers than other states in the region and has a higher percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in school than the national average, other states in the region, and many urban areas including Los Angeles, Chicago, Atlanta, and Houston. The District is among the nation’s leaders in the availability, accessibility, and quality of early care and education programs, and far exceeds the national and Region 3 averages for child-development centers accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the ratio of children to slots at licensed child-development centers.¹¹

Early child care comes in several forms, including licensed child-care homes and centers, as well as public school preschool

Nationwide trends show that a growing number of grandparents are assuming the role of primary caregiver for grandchildren when the child's parents aren't able to, thus allowing the children to stay in the care of their birth families. One out of every five children in the District of Columbia has a grandparent as a primary caregiver. This exceeds the national rate of one in every 12 children under the age of 18 who live with a grandparent or other relative as primary caregiver. Between 75 percent and 80 percent of grandparent caregivers are not of retirement age, and therefore must balance caring for their grandchildren with an already full work schedule. They must

also find housing to accommodate their larger families. Those who live in grandparent-headed households are nearly 35 percent more likely to live below the poverty line than those living in other households with children. In addition, many grandparent caregivers do not have legal guardianship of their grandchildren, thus creating difficulty securing coverage for a child's medical services and sometimes registering the child for school.

To read real stories about real families and grandparents as primary caregivers living in District neighborhoods, Log onto www.aarpdc.org

For more information, contact the Government of the District of Columbia's Web site: www.dc.gov and link to agencies. The agencies section of the Web site gives choices between agencies/services.

programs. Figures from the Office of Early Childhood Development in the city's Human Services Department show that in fiscal year 2003, 601 licensed child-care centers served 23,616 children in the District. Nationwide, the city ranks first in the percentage of family child-care homes that are accredited and second in the percentage of accredited licensed child-care centers. The DCPS is serving 4,351 children in its preschool and prekindergarten programs during the 2003-04 school year, and charter schools are serving 720 3- and 4-year-olds.

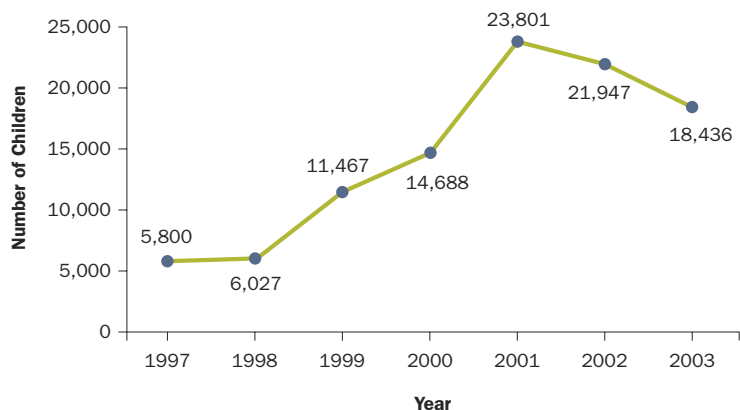
The city's Early Childhood Development office also reports that 425 of the city's licensed child-development centers participate in its D.C. Child-Care Subsidy Program. During fiscal 2003, more than 18,000 children received subsidized child care, and 1,460 were on a waiting list as of February 2004.

With the implementation of welfare reform in 1997, the District began investing large portions of federal grant money in early child care. This investment supported dramatic growth in the number of children receiving subsidized child care between 1997 and 2001, as shown in Exhibit 7. However, federal grant awards have decreased in recent years, and without local dollars to supplement the loss, the subsidy program faces serious budget constraints. These constraints are directly reflected in the decreasing number of children receiving subsidized child care



Exhibit 7: Number of Children Receiving Subsidized Child Care in the District of Columbia, 1997-2003

There was a significant increase in the number of children receiving subsidized child care from 1997 to 2001. Since then, the number of children receiving subsidized child care has been declining.



Data Source: DC Action for Children, 2004.

and presents obstacles to expanding or maintaining access to subsidized child care.

Another resource for intervention and positive programming is quality after-care and out-of-school-time programs. After-school programs, including those sponsored by schools, community organizations, or churches, not only give children a safe place to go, but can provide enriching learning experiences in an environment outside of the classroom. A large number of out-of-school-time programs currently operate in the District, covering a broad range of interests and providing services to a diverse population of children. These programs range from enrichment programs like Asian American Lead (AALEAD), which provides an integrated academic enrichment program to 36 children from ages 6 to 13 in the Vietnamese American community of Mount Pleasant/Columbia Heights, to programs like the Shakespeare Theatre's community-

based, after-school youth theater program. The "SE Project" invites students in grades 4 through 12 from Southeast D.C. to explore their world through unique individual and collaborative theater experiences. The D.C. Public Schools After-Care for All Program served 7,040 students this year at 62 sites across the city.¹²

In this chapter we have discussed the District of Columbia's: 1) steadily declining population, 2) varied racial and ethnic composition between wards, 3) high concentration of children and of poverty, particularly in Wards 7 and 8, and 4) high availability, accessibility, and quality of early care and early childhood education programs. The next chapter will outline the characteristics of public school students in the District of Columbia and discuss public school curriculum and school facilities.

If you want to learn more about our children and their families:

U.S. Census Bureau

<http://www.census.gov>

DC Agenda Issue Scan, 2004

http://www.dcagenda.org/dc_pub.htm

D.C. Kids Count

www.dckidscount.org

American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)

<http://www.aarp.org/states/dc/>

Government of the District of Columbia

<http://www.dc.gov>

Chapter Notes

- 1 Council of Latino Agencies, *State of Latinos in the District of Columbia: Trends, Consequences, and Recommendations* September, 2002. The Council's report expresses concern about data collection with respect to the Latino population in the District, citing "limitations in data collection, a lack of consistency in population identification, and a tendency to conflate or overlook variables of ethnicity and race" that limit in-depth analysis of key demographics for this population. The Council of Latino Agencies currently comprises 37 multicultural organizations and provides assistance to grassroots organizations while advocating for increased support for community-based efforts to improve the health, education, housing, and social welfare conditions for Washington-area Latinos. With respect to the youth population, the Council of Latino Agencies casts some doubt on the accuracy of the census data, reporting that "in 1990, a higher proportion of children were undercounted as compared to the rest of the population."
- 2 U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.
- 3 Rubin, Mark. *2000 Census Numbers Reveal Higher Poverty Numbers in the District by Ward and Neighborhood Cluster*, DC Agenda Neighborhood Information Services Research Papers, 2002.
- 4 DC Agenda, *Issue Scan*, 2003.
- 5 Rubin, Mark. *2000 Census Numbers Reveal Higher Poverty Numbers in the District by Ward and Neighborhood Cluster*, DC Agenda Neighborhood Information Services Research Papers, 2002.
- 6 DC Agenda, *Issue Scan*, 2003. Page 50.
- 7 Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count in the District of Columbia, 2003.
- 8 Children living in families with three or more of the following characteristics are considered at "high risk": 1) Child lives in a family with income below the poverty line, 2) Child lives in a single-parent family, 3) Child lives in a family where no parent has full-time, year-round employment, 4) Child lives with a household head who is a high school dropout. Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Children at Risk: State Trends 1990–2000, A First Look at Census 2000 Supplementary Survey Data*, A PRB/KIDS COUNT Special Report
- 9 DC Agenda, *Issue Scan*. 2004.
- 10 Urban Institute Justice Policy Center, *Juvenile Crime in Washington, D.C.*, December 2003.
- 11 DC Agenda, *Issue Scan*. 2004.
- 12 D.C. Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, <<http://www.cyite.org>> accessed 11 May 2004.

A young boy with light-colored hair and round glasses is focused on a laptop screen. He is wearing a dark t-shirt. In the background, other students are seated at desks, and a teacher is visible, all in a classroom setting. The image has a blue tint.

CHAPTER TWO

our students and their schools

A series of five horizontal bars in green, orange, blue, yellow, and green, stacked vertically on the right side of the page.

Knowing who the city's students are, where they attend school, and what they are taught is crucial to improving public education in the District of Columbia.

A look at each of these factors indicates that while significant shifts are occurring in our public school student population and in what is taught in our public schools, some challenges remain the same.

Two out of every three public school students live at or near the poverty line. This rate has not shifted significantly over the past 10 years.¹ After major declines in public school enrollment over the past 30 years, enrollment stabilized in the late 1990s before declining slightly in each of the past two years. At the same time, the number of public school students identified as either English language learners or in need of special education services is increasing.

Significant changes also have occurred in the delivery of public education. Until 1997, the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) was the only local education agency that operated in the city. Today, 44 local education agencies operate in the District. They are the DCPS, which operates 169 schools, and 43 public charter schools, each of which is treated as a separate local education agency.

This chapter outlines the characteristics of the District's public school students and its public schools. It begins with a discussion of the racial and economic backgrounds of

public school students. This is followed by a description of the enrollment patterns of public school students, including breakouts of charter school and DCPS enrollment over time and by grade. The section on student enrollment also includes an examination of students' English language and special education characteristics. The chapter concludes with a discussion of curriculum and school facilities—two aspects of our schools that have a direct effect on student learning.

Student Demographics

Public school students in the District of Columbia are predominantly Black and predominantly poor, particularly in Wards 7 and 8. This is significant for several reasons. First, a student's economic background is a strong indicator of his or her academic success.² Second, students in high poverty schools—even those students from middle-income families—achieve at lower levels than those in schools with students from mixed-income backgrounds.³ Third, the District's public schools are still racially segregated. Each of these factors must be acknowledged and addressed in discussions of how to improve the delivery of public education in the District.

Approximately one out of four White children living in the District attended public schools during the 2002–03 school year.⁴ White students made up 4 percent of the

DCPS and Public Charter Schools

The District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) is a traditional local education agency with a superintendent and a Board of Education. The DCPS is responsible for maintaining administrative control of its 169 schools. District school-age children are guaranteed placements in their neighborhood DCPS school, and they have the option of using an out-of-boundary application process to attend a different DCPS school.

Public charter schools were established in the District with the passage by the U.S. Congress of the District of Columbia School Reform Act of 1995; the first District charter schools began operating in the 1997–98 school year. Each of the 43 charter schools currently in operation is also a local education

agency. However, charter schools are independent from the D.C. Board of Education and the superintendent. Charter schools have open enrollment, so students living in any part of the city are eligible to attend the charter school of their choice. All District charter schools must be approved for operation by one of the District's two chartering authorities, the D.C. Board of Education and the D.C. Public Charter School Board.

Currently, there are close to 15,000 local education agencies, or school districts, and over 93,000 schools, operating in the United States.⁵ Forty-one states and the District of Columbia have passed charter school legislation, and approximately 3,000 public charter schools operate across the United States.⁶

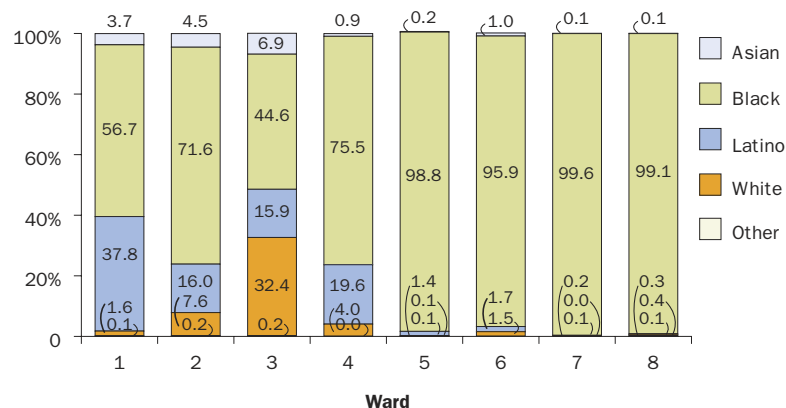
total public school student population, with the majority attending schools in Wards 2 and 3. In Ward 2, 8 percent of the public school student population was White, while the 2000 Census reported 34 percent of the ward's residents 17 and under to be White.⁷ In Ward 3, 32 percent of the public school student population was White, while the Census reported 83 percent of the ward's entire youth population to be White. White students made up almost 5 percent of DCPS student enrollment and slightly more than 1 percent of public charter school student enrollments during the 2002–03 school year.

In comparison, approximately four out of five Black children living in the District attended public schools during the 2002–03 school year. Black students made up 85 percent of the total public school student population and more than 95 percent of the public school student population in Wards 5, 6, 7, and 8. While the census reported 44 percent of the residents 17 and under in Ward 2 to be Black, Black students made up 72 percent of the ward's student population. This contrast was more pronounced in Ward 3, where Blacks accounted for 4 percent of the youth population and 45 percent of the student population. Black students made up almost 84 percent of DCPS student enrollment and nearly 92 percent of charter school student enrollments.

Latino students made up 9 percent of the District public school student population and attended schools primarily in Wards 1, 2, 3, and 4 during the 2002–03 school year. Latinos made up 38 percent of the student population in Ward 1 and between 16 percent and 20 percent in Wards 2, 3, and 4. Latino students made up 10 percent of DCPS student enrollment and 6.5 percent of charter school student enrollments. Asian students made up 1.5 percent of the student population and attended schools primarily in Wards 1, 2, and 3. Asian students made up 1.8 percent of DCPS student enrollment and 0.2 percent of charter school student enrollments. Other races made up 0.1

Exhibit 8: Racial/Ethnic Composition of Public School Students, by Ward, SY 2002–03

During the 2002-03 school year, Black students were the largest racial/ethnic group that attended public schools in each ward of the District of Columbia. Hispanic students attended public schools primarily in Wards 1, 2, 3, and 4. White students attended public schools primarily in Ward 3, and Asian students attended public schools primarily in Wards 1, 2, and 3.



Note: Some percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.
Data Sources: Office of Educational Accountability, District of Columbia Public Schools; Education Center, State Education Office.

percent of the public school student population.

Among the nation's 100 largest school districts in the 2001–02 school year, the DCPS had the sixth-largest nonwhite student population, at 95.4 percent. National comparison data are not available for charter schools.

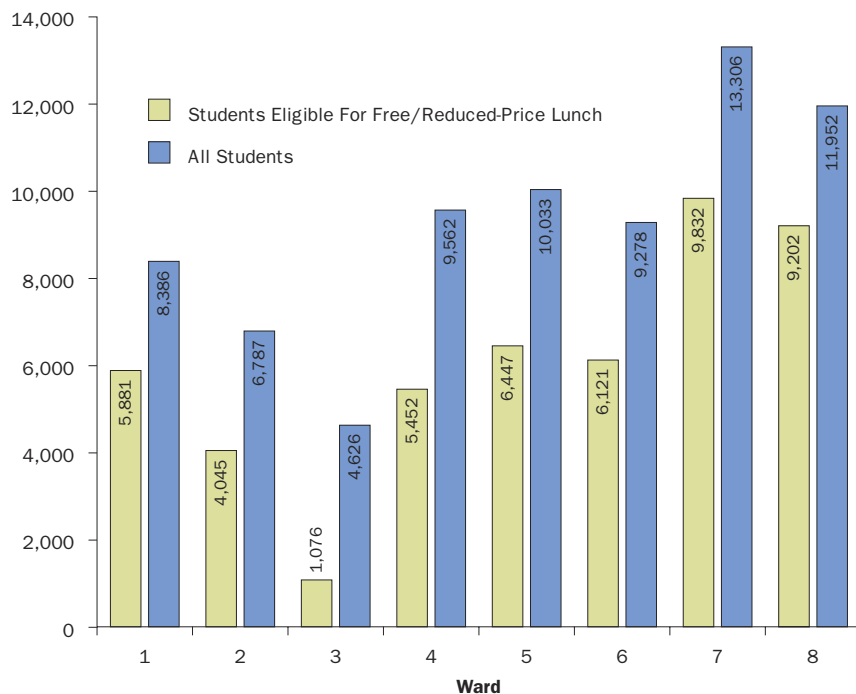
Nearly two out of every three public school students in the District of



Columbia qualify for free or reduced-price lunch under the National School Lunch Program.⁹ The percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch is a common measure used to

Exhibit 9: Number of Public School Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch, by Ward, SY 2002–03⁹

Public schools in Wards 7 and 8 have both the highest number of students and the highest number of low-income students in the District of Columbia, as measured by free and reduced-price lunch eligibility.



Data Sources: Division of Food and Nutrition Services, District of Columbia Public Schools; Education Center, State Education Office

determine how many students live at or near the poverty level.¹⁰ Sixty-six percent of all public school students in the District were eligible for free or reduced-price lunches during the 2003–04 school year. Sixty-three percent of DCPS students and 78 percent of charter school students were eligible for the program.

In the 2003–03 school year, schools in Wards 7 and 8 contained the highest percentages of low-income public school students in the District of Columbia as displayed in Exhibit 9. More than 70 percent of students attending schools in Wards 1, 7, and 8 were eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program. Schools in all other wards except Ward 3 had at least 57 percent of their students eligible. Twenty-three percent of students attending Ward 3 schools were eligible.

The DCPS ranked 29th in terms of the percentage of students eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program among the 100 largest school districts in the United States in the 2001–02 school year, at 61 percent. National comparison data are not available for charter schools.

School Enrollment

Public schools in the District of Columbia enroll less than half the number of students that attended school here in 1970. This decline in

enrollment has coincided with a drop in the District's overall population and an increase in private school enrollments. While overall public school enrollment has stabilized in recent years, it has declined slightly for each of the past two years.

This decline is concentrated in DCPS schools; enrollment in charter schools has continued to grow since their inception in 1997, slowing the rate of decrease in the overall public school enrollment but accelerating the decline in DCPS enrollment. From the 1997–98 school year to the 2003–04 school year, DCPS' school enrollment decreased by 12,863 students, from 77,111 to



64,248.¹¹ (See Exhibit 10). During the same period, as the number of charter schools increased, charter school enrollment went from 300 to 13,743 students. Currently, charter school enrollment represents 18 percent of the total public school student population.

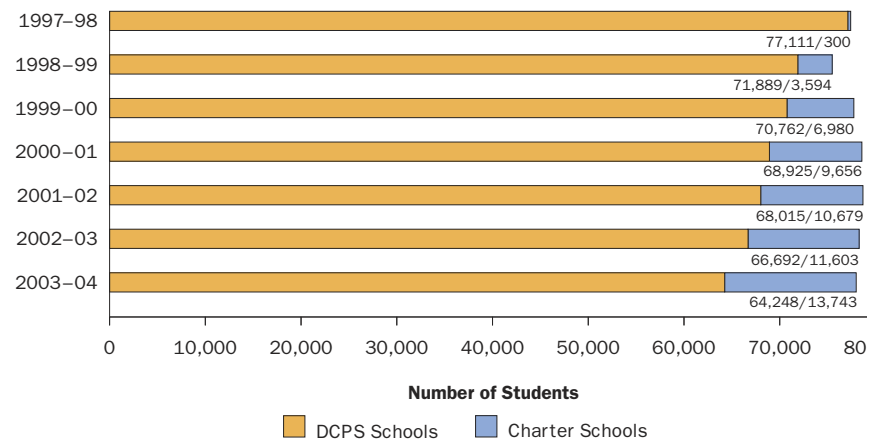
Even as overall school enrollment has declined, the number of students receiving special education services has increased. Special education students are students who receive services as documented in an individualized education program, or IEP, which describes the educational program that has been designed to meet that child's specific needs.¹² Exhibit 11 shows the special education population has increased by 11 percent since the 2001–02 school year. Special education students currently make up more than 15 percent of the total student population.

Special education enrollment figures include students who have been placed in special education programs outside the District but whose tuitions are paid by DCPS. These students fall into two categories: students who are served in nonpublic schools—often referred to as “tuition grant students”—and special education students who are in foster care and enrolled in public schools in the surrounding counties. Currently, 2,595 students are enrolled in nonpublic special education placements or public schools in the surrounding counties, at a significant cost to the District of Columbia (see Chapter 5). Excluding these students, 13 percent of the DCPS student population and 10 percent of the charter school student population are made up of special education students.

The number of students identified as English language learners is also increasing. The term English language learner (ELL) indicates a person who is in the process of acquiring English proficiency and has a first language other than English.¹³ The number of English language learners in District public schools has increased 39 percent since the 2001–02 school year, as presented in Exhibit 12.

Exhibit 10: DCPS and Charter School Enrollments, SY 1997-98 to 2003-04

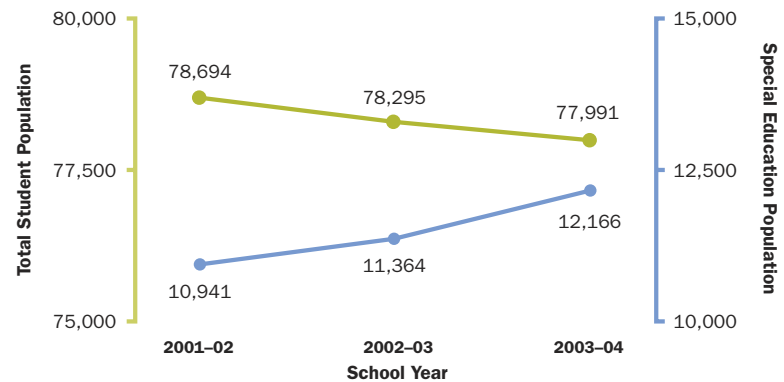
Since the 1997-98 school year, DCPS enrollments have declined and charter school enrollments have increased. While overall public school enrollment has decreased slightly over the past two years, it has remained relatively stable since the 1997-98 school year.



Data Sources: District of Columbia Public Schools, Facility Master Plan, December 20, 2000; District of Columbia Public and Public Charter School Enrollment, Thompson, Cobb, Bazilio, and Associates, P.C., School Years 2001-02 to 2003-04; State Education Office Addendum, School Years 2002-03 and 2003-04.

Exhibit 11: Rising Numbers of Special Education Students, SY 2001-02 to 2003-04

Since the 2001-02 school year, the overall number of students has decreased, while the number of students receiving special education services has increased.



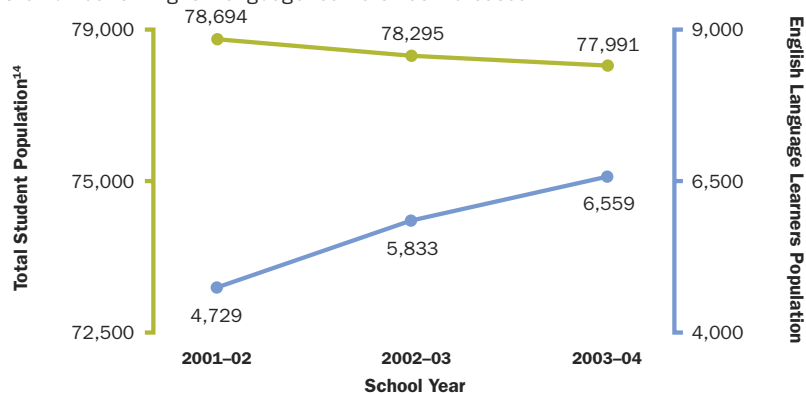
Data Sources: District of Columbia Public and Public Charter School Enrollment, Thompson, Cobb, Bazilio, and Associates, P.C., School Years 2001-02 to 2003-04; State Education Office Addendums, School Years 2002-03 and 2003-04

Almost 9 percent of the students attending public schools in the District have been identified as English language learners. Four out of five of these students attend schools in Wards 1 and 4, which have the highest Latino populations in the District (see Chapter 1). Eight percent of the students attending DCPS schools and about 11 percent of students attending charter schools are English language learners.



Exhibit 12: Rising Numbers of English Language Learners, SY 2001–02 to 2003–04

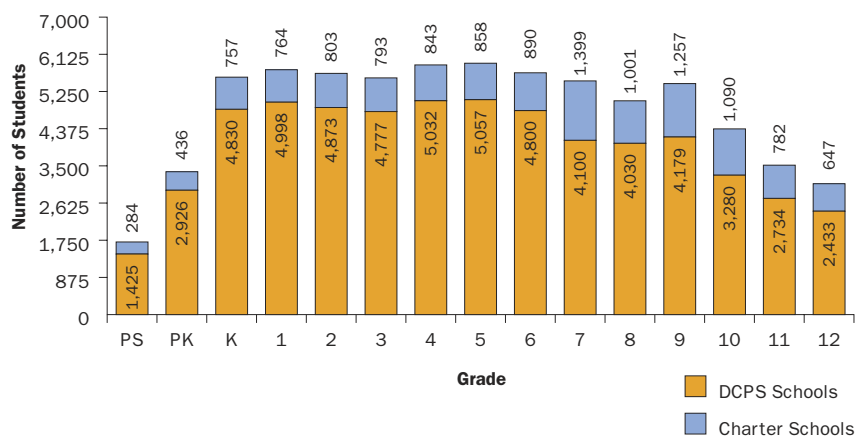
Since the 2001–02 school year, the overall number of students has decreased while the number of English language learners has increased.



Data Source: District of Columbia Public and Public Charter School Enrollment, Thompson, Cobb, Bazilio, and Associates, P.C., School Years 2001–02 to 2003–04; State Education Office Addendums, School Years 2002-03 and 2003-04.

Exhibit 13: DCPS and Charter School Enrollment by Grade, SY 2003–04

Public school enrollment decreases after 9th grade.



Data Sources: District of Columbia Public and Public Charter School Enrollment, Thompson, Cobb, Bazilio, and Associates, P.C., January 2004; State Education Office Addendum, January 2004.

The number of public school students enrolled at each grade level drops significantly after 9th grade.

Overall, public school enrollment in the District of Columbia decreases by more than 43 percent between 9th and 12th grades. (See Exhibit 13). During the 2000–01 school year, 5,500 students were enrolled in 9th grade in public schools in the District. For the 2003–04 school year, 3,080 students are enrolled in grade 12. These figures show that the public schools' Class of 2004 has decreased by 44 percent over the past four years.

It is unclear where these students have gone. Dropout statistics for public schools in the District are inconclusive (see Chapter 4), and no mechanism exists for tracking the transfer of students between the DCPS, public charter schools, nonpublic schools, and public schools in the surrounding counties.

DCPS' school sizes and class sizes were small compared with other large public school districts across the nation in the 2001–02 school year. Of the 100 largest school districts in the nation, the DCPS had the fourth-lowest students-per-school ratio and the third-lowest students-to-teacher ratio as shown in Exhibit 14. In the 2001–02 school year, DCPS and charter schools averaged 385 elementary school students, 443 middle school students, and 472 high school students per school.

DCPS Curriculum

Curriculum is the content of any school's instructional program; it defines what students are to know in specific subject areas and guides the teaching and learning process. Local education agencies often standardize their curricula across schools to ensure that all students learn the same concepts, content, and skills.

DCPS' content and performance standards and curriculum-pacing guides can be accessed on its Web site (<http://www.k12.dc.us>), but systemwide implementation of a curriculum does not occur because schools are not required to use a DCPS

curriculum. Some DCPS schools choose to use the standards and curriculum guides. Other DCPS schools have adopted nationally marketed instructional models, or they have selected alternative or complementary curriculum materials.

A fall 2003 study of the DCPS by the Council of the Great City Schools, a Washington-based association that represents nearly 60 of the nation's large-city school districts, found that the school district had "delegated the challenge of raising student achievement to the schools and individual principals." The report's nine key recommendations for making DCPS instructional practices more like those of districts seeing progress in the academic achievement of students appear below.

The DCPS has eight magnet schools, each with its own program emphasis and one that offers an International Baccalaureate Diploma Program. Additionally, there are 14 magnet programs in elementary and senior high schools. In the high schools these have taken the form of thematic academies, for example, International Studies; Law, Justice & Security; and Public Service. Eight specialized training programs are offered, including the Emergency Medical Services Cadet Program and Business Education. Each of the above programs has student eligibility requirements.

The DCPS provides four alternative instructional programs for students who are at risk of failing in a traditional school or who have dropped out. There also are programs with different learning environments that deliver special education services for students

Exhibit 14: School and Class Sizes, SY 2001-02¹⁵

During the 2001-02 school year, a high number of teachers and schools served a low number of students in the DCPS as compared with the nation's 100 largest school districts. National comparison data are not available for public charter schools.

	School Size	Rank		Class Size	Rank
National Average	705	—	National Average	16.9	—
DCPS	415	4	DCPS	13.6	3
Boston	464	6	Cleveland	14.0	5
Cleveland	578	25	Atlanta	15.1	22
Atlanta	583	26	Baltimore	15.2	23
Baltimore	631	35	Boston	N/A	N/A

Data Source: Characteristics of the 100 Largest Public Elementary and Secondary School Districts in the United States: 2001-02, National Center of Education Statistics.

with disabilities. Additionally, as described in Chapter 1, the DCPS is one of the few local education agencies in the country offering full-day classes for 3- and 4-year olds, as well as all-day kindergarten. Head Start classes for 3- and 4- year olds also are available.

Research shows that the quality of a high school curriculum has a pronounced impact on college degree completion, particularly for Black and Latino students.¹⁶ Advanced Placement courses are a useful indicator of curriculum quality. Currently, 16 DCPS high schools offer at least five Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Of the exam candidates in the 2002-03 school year, 61 percent were females and 57 percent were Black. The DCPS reports that 2,591 students are currently enrolled in AP and International Baccalaureate courses.

Recently, the DCPS committed to strengthening its content and performance standards and curriculum in core subject areas in preparation for system-wide implementation.

Council of the Great City Schools Recommendations

1. Develop a common and coherent vision for where the DCPS wants to go academically;
2. Set measurable goals for academic improvement;
3. Establish a new accountability system for attaining academic goals;
4. Standardize districtwide instructional strategies and curriculum;
5. Provide focused and sustained districtwide professional development on the implementation of the new curriculum;
6. Ensure that reforms are implemented at the classroom level;
7. Use data to monitor progress and decide on instructional interventions;
8. Begin system reforms at the elementary level but also start reforming high schools; and
9. Focus on the district's lowest-performing schools.

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) contains important assessment and accountability requirements that must be met by all states and school districts that receive federal funds. Therefore, provisions and standards contained in NCLB will be discussed in several locations within the report.

The No Child Left Behind Act is the current reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. The NCLB requires that each state develop a statewide accountability system that applies to all public schools, including public charter schools. For the purposes of the Act, the District of Columbia is treated as if it were a state. Specifically, the law requires states 1) to develop or select annual reading/language arts, mathematics, and, eventually, science assessments that are aligned with state content and performance standards, 2) to ensure that the assessments are

administered to students in all public schools, and 3) to use these measures of achievement to report school-by-school and district-by-district results. Chapter 4 contains more information about the accountability requirements of NCLB and about what the District must do in order to satisfy them.

In addition, the District of Columbia, along with each of the 50 states, must develop a plan to ensure that all teachers are highly qualified in core subject areas by the end of the 2005–06 school year. Chapter 3 explains how the NCLB Act defines what highly qualified means and what it will take for the District to have all teachers meet the standard of being highly qualified.

In Chapter 5, NCLB is discussed as a source of federal grant funds that help support the cost of programs aimed at improving the academic performance of students from low-income families.

Charter School Curriculum

Each public charter school is a distinct entity and is held accountable by a

“charter.” This charter is a 15-year legal contract between the Board of Trustees of the nonprofit organization operating the school and the respective chartering authority. The charter includes, among other items, the school’s mission, goals, programs, number and grade levels of students served, methods of assessment, and ways to measure success.

Every five years, the respective chartering authority reviews the school’s performance. If students’ academic progress fails to meet the expectations agreed upon in the school’s charter and accountability plan, the school may have its charter revoked and be closed by its chartering authority.

Each of the 37 charter schools operating in the District of Columbia chose its own area of concentration or thematic program emphasis before it was awarded a charter. Some opted to associate with education management companies and, in doing so, may have adopted a management company’s particular curriculum or approach to teaching and learning. Others chose to adopt all or parts of the DCPS standards and curriculum guidelines. Still others designed their own or adapted existing curricula and education program models from a variety of sources. Four of the 18 public charter high

schools offer Advanced Placement courses, one for the first time this school year.

District charter schools serve a wide range of populations and purposes. They include the nation’s first public charter boarding school, a school that serves the District’s increasing adult immigrant population, several schools that serve youths who have not succeeded in traditional schools, schools that serve students with learning disabilities, and several college preparatory schools. Eight additional charter schools are expected to open during the 2004–05 school year.

Facilities

The maintenance, renovation, and acquisition of school buildings represent some of the most pressing issues facing public education in the District of Columbia. Research shows that the quality of a school facility has a direct effect on student performance.¹⁸ Yet many of the city’s public school buildings are outdated or in disrepair. Only 12 DCPS school buildings have been built or have undergone major renovation since 1980,¹⁹ and many of the buildings constructed in the 1970s contain open classrooms that are no longer compatible with general education practice. The average DCPS school building opened 60 years ago.²⁰ For charter schools, the lengthy process required to locate, negotiate for, and renovate appropriate school spaces

District Charter School Reaches Largest Public Charter School Bond Deal

On Nov. 12, 2003, the Friendship Edison Public Charter School closed on the nation’s largest public charter school bond deal to date. Proceeds from the \$44.9 million bond sale will be used to pay off mortgages and to upgrade technology within Friendship’s system, which includes four separate campuses in the District. The deal was made possible in part by the facilities allotment in the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula, which Friendship will use to pay debt service on the bonds.¹⁷

can compound facilities-related difficulties. Of the 45 charter schools that are scheduled to be in operation during the 2004–05 school year, 28 do not have a permanent space and may need to seek a permanent facility in the near future.²¹

The DCPS has plans to consolidate four schools within the next three years in order to make more effective use of excess space.²² The DCPS estimates that it has the capacity for 73,000 students in the school buildings currently in use; fewer than 62,000 students currently attend these schools. There are plans to conduct additional consolidation studies.

The level of funding devoted to facilities design, project management, construction, and equipment has increased in recent years, but it is scheduled to decrease beginning in fiscal year 2005. These facilities projects are commonly referred to as capital—as opposed to operational—improvements. In fiscal year 1996 the DCPS capital program budget was \$0.²³ In contrast, the District budgeted \$196 million for DCPS capital improvements in fiscal year 2004.²⁴ The mayor’s proposed fiscal year 2005 Budget and Financial Plan calls for the capital improvement budget to decrease to \$173 million in fiscal year 2005, \$147 million in fiscal year 2006, and approximately \$98 million in each fiscal year from 2007 through 2010.

The DCPS estimates that it will require a total of \$3.5 billion in total expenditures over 20 years for all DCPS schools to become modernized.²⁵ It proposes that the 20-year

financing plan include a contribution of \$2 billion from the District government, as well as \$700 million in certificates of participation, \$700 million in Congressional appropriations, and other sources.²⁶ In fiscal year 2004, Congress appropriated \$4.5 million for the glazing of DCPS school building windows and the modernization of school playgrounds.

Because individual charter schools pay for the maintenance, renovation, and mortgage or rent of their facilities, the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF) provides charter schools with a facilities allowance that is based on an average of recent annual DCPS actual facilities expenditures (see Chapter 5 for a description of the UPSFF). In addition, charter schools received nearly \$31 million in loans through the District of Columbia Revenue Bond Program to buy and renovate facilities in fiscal years 2001 and 2002.

In this chapter we have discussed the: 1) high numbers of low-income students and children of color who attend public schools in the District of Columbia, 2) decline in the city’s public school enrollments since 1970, 3) recent efforts by the DCPS to strengthen its curriculum and standards, 4) diverse curriculum offerings of public charter schools, and 5) pressing needs of public school facilities in the District. The next chapter will discuss the District’s progress toward providing high-quality teachers and principals to all of its public school students.

Dramatic Increases in DCPS Advanced Placement Testing

Despite a significant decline in student enrollment, the number of Advanced Placement exams given in the DCPS has increased by 77 percent since the 1998–99 school year. During the same period the number of candidates—students who took AP exams—has increased by 47 percent, and the number of subjects offered on AP exams in the

Survey Reports Link between Quality of School Facilities and Teacher Satisfaction

During the 2001-02 school year, approximately 20 percent of all DCPS teachers were surveyed about school conditions and design. The results of the survey, which was commissioned by the 21st Century School Fund, showed that more than half of DCPS school teachers were dissatisfied with their facilities. Among DCPS teachers surveyed, the results showed that:

- 68 percent reported schools to have bad indoor air quality;
- 34 percent reported suffering health problems rooted in poor environmental conditions in their schools; and

- 65 percent of those who reported suffering health problems related to poor facilities are considering changing schools.

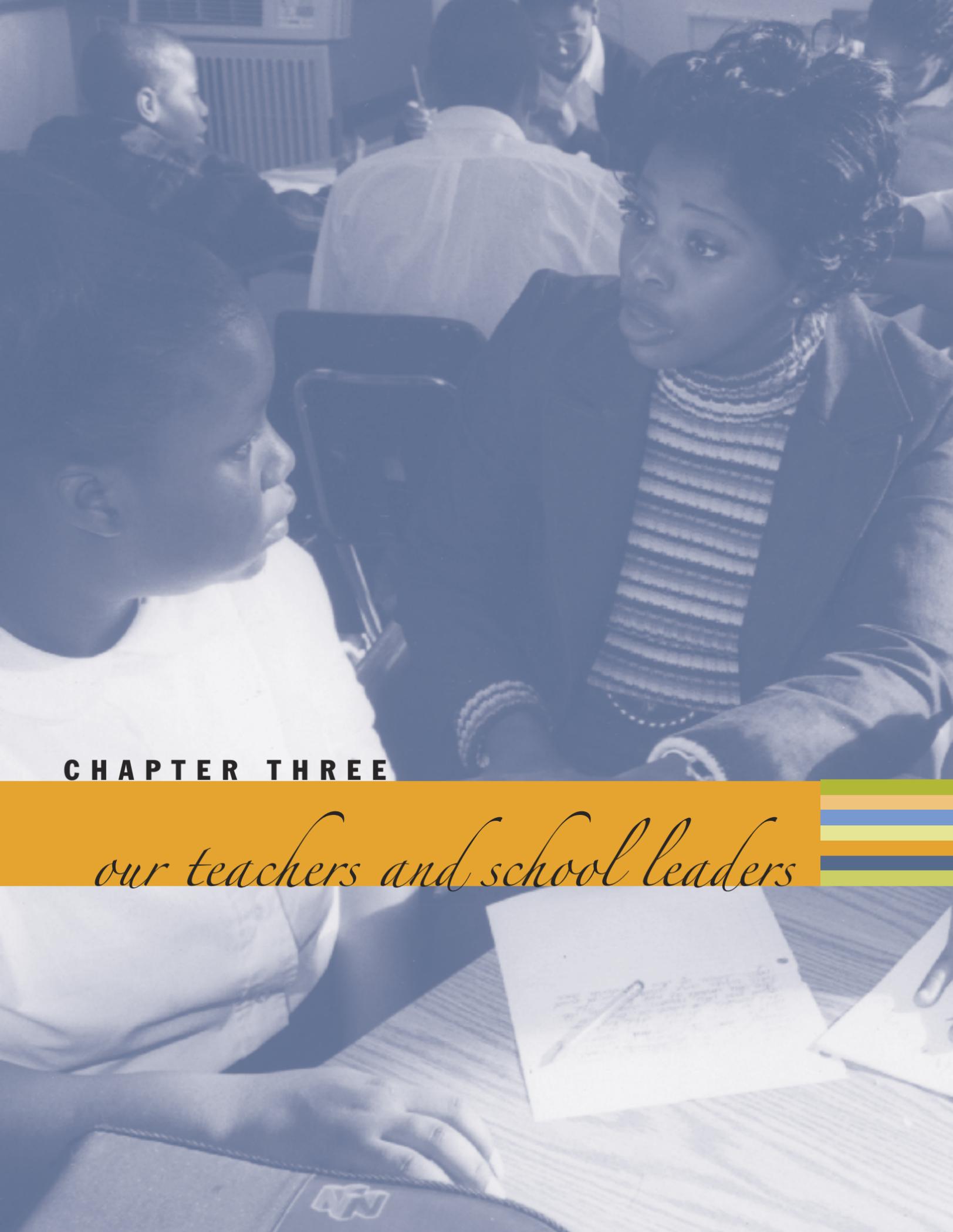
The effect of school facilities on the quality of teaching in the District’s public schools is of particular importance. Many analysts argue that teacher staffing problems are caused less by a shortage of teachers entering the profession than by the large number of teachers who are leaving. The report cites poor quality of school facilities as a significant factor in the attrition of teachers from the profession.

If you want to learn more about the characteristics of our students and their schools:

Government of the District of Columbia's Education Center
<http://www.educationcenter.dc.gov/>
 The District of Columbia Public Schools
<http://www.k12.dc.us/dcps/home.html>
 The District of Columbia Board of Education Charter Schools
<http://www.dcbotcharters.org/>
 The District of Columbia Public Charter School Board
<http://www.dcpubliccharter.com/indexmain.htm>
 DCPS Facilities Master Plan Update: Fall 2003
www.k12.dc.us/dcps/OFM/dcofmmp.html
 The District of Columbia Public Schools Curriculum
 Restoring Excellence to the District of Columbia Public Schools
<http://www.cgcs.org/pdfs/DCPSReportFinal.pdf>
 District of Columbia Public and Public Charter School Enrollment
 A Five-Year Statistical Glance at D.C. Public Schools,
 School Years 1997-98 through 2001-02
 Government of the District of Columbia
<http://www.dc.gov>

Chapter Notes

- 1 Mary Levy, "DCPS Enrollment 1979 to 2003" April 2, 2004. Special Nutrition and Commodities Program 2003-04. From 1993 to 2003, the percentage of DCPS students identified as eligible for receiving free or reduced-price lunch ranged from a low of 61 percent in 1993 to a high of 73 percent in 2001. Charter school free or reduced-price lunch data are only available for the 2002-03 and 2003-04 school years.
- 2 Poverty and Learning, ERIC Digest, Number 83, <http://www.ericfacility.net/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed357433.html> accessed 11 May 11, 2004.
- 3 *Divided We Fail: Coming Together Through Public School Choice: The Report of the Century Foundation Task Force on the Common School* (New York: Century Foundation Press, 2002).
- 4 This statement is based on a comparison of the 2002-03 DCPS membership report and 2002-03 data provided by the charter schools and chartering authorities and Census 2000 data.
- 5 Digest of Education Statistics, <<http://www.nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d02/index.asp>> accessed May 11, 2004.
- 6 The Center for Education Reform, <<http://www.edreform.com>> accessed 11 May 2004.
- 7 Ward-level race and ethnic youth population data includes children 17 and younger, by single race and Hispanic origin. People of Hispanic origin may be of any race (Government of District Columbia Office of Planning, <<http://planning.dc.gov/planning>> accessed May 11, 2004).
- 8 Special Nutrition & Commodities Program, 2003-04 school year.
- 9 Of 192 schools reporting, including 157 DCPS schools and 35 charter schools. School-level data is not available for the 2003-04 school year.
- 10 Students qualify for categorical eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch if their household currently receives food stamps, TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), or participates in the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR). Homeless children are also automatically eligible for free school meals. Students qualify for income-based eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch if their household income falls below 130 percent of the federal poverty level (free) or is between 130 percent and 185 percent (reduced-price).
- 11 These figures include the enrollments of Head Start schools that are operated by the DCPS. In SY 2003-04, six Head Start programs enrolled 136 students.
- 12 As defined by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), special education means specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of students with physical, emotional, or cognitive learning disabilities.
- 13 Other common terms include language-minority students, limited-English proficient (LEP), and English as a second language (ESL). School agencies are required to provide specialized support to English language learners until the student no longer has a barrier to learning due to his or her English language skills.
- 14 The total enrollment includes tuition grant students and special education students enrolled in public schools in the surrounding counties, however, language proficiency information is not available for these students.
- 15 These cities were chosen for comparison with the District of Columbia due to their similar demographic profiles. Indicators chosen for comparison included overall population size, racial/ethnic compositions, and youth poverty rate.
- 16 Adelman, Clifford. "Answers in the Tool Box." U.S. Department of Education, 1999.
- 17 Vadum, Mathew. "D.C. Does Biggest Charter School Issue Ever, With Investment-Grade Ratings." *The Bond Buyer*, Nov. 18, 2003. <http://www.hunton.com/pdfs/article/glyph_charter-school.pdf> accessed May 11, 2004.
- 18 Schneider, Mark. "Do School Facilities Affect Academic Outcomes?" National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities: November 2002.
- 19 Board of Education Facilities Retreat Presentation, March 11, 2004.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Friends of Choice in Urban Schools.
- 22 District of Columbia Public Schools, Facilities Master Plan Update, Fall 2003.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 FY 2004 Proposed Budget and Financial Plan, Government of the District of Columbia, March 29, 2004.
- 25 District of Columbia Public Schools, Facilities Master Plan Update, Fall 2003.
- 26 Ibid.



CHAPTER THREE

our teachers and school leaders



A good teacher is someone who has a good attitude, is smart, and helps students to learn.

—Robin, 8th grade, J.H. Johnson Junior High

Students who get several good teachers in a row can overcome barriers of poverty, race, language, and other risk factors to reach high academic achievement, while students who have two or more poor teachers are likely to disengage from school.¹ The effect is so dramatic that students with effective teachers for three years in a row performed 50 percentile points higher on a 100-point scale than comparable students assigned to the least effective teachers for three consecutive years.²

Principals are responsible for creating a school community that focuses first and foremost on improving student achievement. Good principals recognize quality teaching and work to ensure that all teachers in their schools are highly qualified. Good principals recognize good instruction and know how to help their teachers improve their practice.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section begins with a look at what is known about high-quality teachers. It provides a snapshot of District of Columbia

public school teachers and reviews District policies and practices regarding teacher recruitment, retention, training, and evaluation. The second part of the section defines strong school leadership and reviews efforts of the District to ensure that each school has a high-quality principal.

High-Quality Teaching

Research has identified several factors that contribute to teacher quality.

The most rigorous research on teacher quality shows:

- A teacher's verbal ability and cognitive ability (depth of knowledge) are the attributes most strongly linked with teacher quality. Specifically researchers found that teachers who perform well on verbal ability tests do better in boosting student achievement.³
- Teacher experience and subject matter knowledge are linked to gains in student achievement.⁴ Effective teachers generally have at least three to five years of teaching experience.

It is not clear whether current licensing systems ensure that licensed teachers possess the above qualities. Many experts view the academic standards established by states to obtain a license as too modest.⁵ At the same time, there is little research indicating that training in pedagogy (teaching skills), which is required by many states to obtain a license, is linked to teacher quality. Experts argue that the present system used by states for licensing teachers discourages potentially excellent teachers from entering the profession.⁶

Both the federal and the District of Columbia governments have established definitions for high-quality teachers. The federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is very specific with regard to the qualifications needed by classroom teachers and requires that every public school classroom have a highly qualified teacher by the 2005–06 school-year. The District's definition of a high quality teacher is specified in the

state licensing standards for teachers. The NCLB teacher quality requirements provide a benchmark for examining the District's teacher licensing standards. NCLB stipulates that a highly qualified teacher must possess:

- 1) A baccalaureate degree,
- 2) State certification in the subject taught, and
- 3) Subject matter competency.

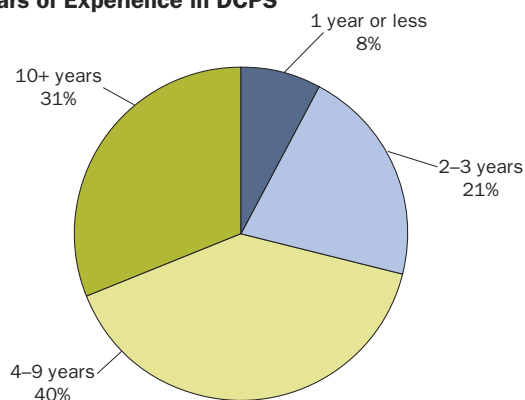
The DCPS recognizes two teaching licenses: the D.C. Standard License and D.C. Professional License. The D.C. Standard License is conferred on teachers who have completed a state-approved teacher preparation program, have a baccalaureate degree, and earn a passing score on the Praxis exams. The D.C. Professional License is for teachers who have earned permanent or continuing contract status with the DCPS. Current District licensing standards have been in place since the early 1990s. District teachers hired before then had to satisfy a different set of licensing standards.

A provisional license is issued to teachers who have a baccalaureate degree, are in the process of completing a state-approved teacher preparation program, and have not taken the Praxis I and II exams. In addition to its regular recruitment program, the District uses two alternative teacher recruitment programs: the D.C. Teaching Fellows and Teach for America. Those hired through these two programs are issued provisional licenses.

The D.C. School Reform Act of 1995 exempts applicants for teaching positions in public charter schools from holding a District teacher license. Although teachers in D.C. public charter schools are not required

Exhibit 15: Teachers' Years of Experience in DCPS

Three out of ten DCPS teachers have at least ten years of experience. Another three out of ten are in their first three years of teaching.



Data Source: DCPS Office of Human Resources, May 28, 2004.

to hold state licensure, they must meet all other qualifications related to subject area proficiency requirements in NCLB. Each charter school establishes its own policies for hiring teachers.

The District of Columbia State Education Agency is exploring the adoption of an additional method by which experienced teachers can demonstrate that they are highly qualified without taking an exam. No Child Left Behind contains a provision titled High Objective, Uniform State Standard of Evaluation (HOUSSE), which allows states to develop a process by which current teachers may demonstrate subject-matter competency. It may consider factors such as a teacher's years of experience, professional development, and continuing education.

Our Children's Teachers

During the 2003-04 school year, nearly 7,000 people taught in public schools in the District of Columbia. Of these, 5,655 taught in the DCPS and more than 900 teachers worked in public charter schools.⁷ As shown in Exhibit 15, seventy one percent of all DCPS teachers

State assessments currently used in District licensing include:

- Praxis I, measures basic skills in reading, writing, and math;
- Praxis II, measures knowledge of and teaching skills related to subject taught.

Two D.C. Alternative Teacher Recruitment Programs

Since 2001 the D.C. Teaching Fellows Program has recruited more than 250 teachers for hard-to-fill subjects such as secondary school math and science, special education, and English as a Second Language. D.C. Teaching Fellows are young professionals from a variety of careers. Fellows have included former attorneys, CEOs, entrepreneurs, and religious practitioners.

Since 1992, the Teach for America Program has placed 580 teachers in high-poverty D.C. public schools. Teach for America recruits graduates from many of the nation's most selective colleges: In 2003 Teach for America accepted only 2,200 out of nearly 16,000 candidates.

have four or more years of experience.

The majority of information available regarding the qualifications of the DCPS teaching force has been collected by the U.S. Department of Education in response to various federal requirements placed on all states and the District. Records to support the reliability of these data are not currently available. Efforts are under way to improve data collection on the qualifications of all District public school teachers. D.C. public charter schools do not have a central system in place for collecting data on the qualifications of public charter school teachers.

The following is based on what is available:

- The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) reports that during the 2003–2004 school year, nine DCPS teachers held NBPTS certification, considered by many experts to provide the most rigorous evaluation process for assessing teacher qualifications.

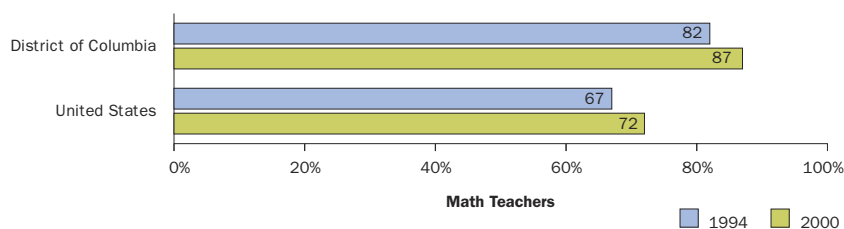
- According to the National Center for Education Statistics, during the 1999–2000 school year, nearly one in five of DCPS' secondary school classes was taught by a teacher who lacked either an academic major or minor in the subject taught.
- The Consolidated State Application to the U.S. Department of Education serves as the basis for DCPS' annual NCLB funding. The September 2003 DCPS Application reported that 75 percent of DCPS teachers were highly qualified under the guidelines set by the federal government. The application also reported that among high poverty schools, 65 percent of the DCPS classroom teachers were highly qualified.⁸

A review of trends over a six year period from 1994 to 2000 shows the percentage of DCPS mathematics teachers with majors in their field whose main assignment was teaching mathematics in grades 7–12 climbed from about 82 percent in 1994 to 87 percent in 2000. However, the percentage of English teachers with majors in their field whose main assignment was teaching grades 7–12 English declined from 90 percent in 1994 to 68 percent in 2000. These data are presented in Exhibit 16.

Exhibit 16: The Percentage of Math and English Teachers With a Major in Their Fields, 1994 and 2000

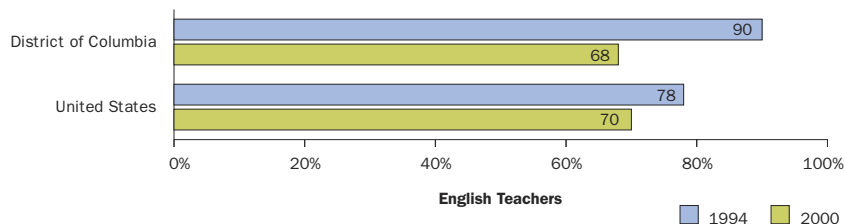
MATH

In both 1994 and 2000-DCPS exceeded the national average for mathematics teachers with majors in their field whose main assignment was teaching mathematics in grades 7–12.



ENGLISH

From 1994 to 2000 the DCPS went from above the national average to below the national average in the percent of English teachers with majors in their field whose main assignment was teaching grades 7–12 English.



Data Source: Meeting NCLB Goals for Highly Qualified Teachers: Estimates by State from Survey Data. Council of Chief State Schools Officers, 2003.

Teacher Recruitment, Retention, Training, and Evaluation

Although we know very little about the current District teaching work force, we can examine the policies and practices in place to recruit, retain, train, and evaluate teachers. In the District of Columbia, seven higher education institutions are recognized by the D.C. Board of Education to prepare teachers. The DCPS, acting as the State Education Agency, reviews the teacher preparation programs at these universities every five years to ensure that they meet state and national standards. Five of these teacher preparation programs are accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). This organization sets

specialty area standards for and accredits teacher preparation programs. The Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC), the other organization that accredits teacher preparation programs, is relatively new and has not assessed any programs in the District of Columbia.

A comparison of the performance of graduates of District teacher preparation programs on state teacher assessments with that of graduates of teacher preparation programs in the 42 states that require teachers to pass state assessments reveals that the passing rate in 2000–01 on state assessments (Praxis I and II) for graduates of the District teacher preparation programs was 79 percent, the lowest for all states requiring statewide teacher assessments. The passing rate nationally on statewide assessments was 93 percent. Arkansas, Montana, Oregon, and West Virginia had 100 percent passing rates for their graduates. It should be noted that not all states use the same assessments. Only the District and 22 other states use the Praxis assessments.⁹

Of the states that use Praxis, the District is one of five states with the lowest minimum passing score for reading, and one of four states with the lowest minimum passing score for writing. The District minimum passing score for math is average when compared with other states.

The NCLB requirement that there be a highly qualified teacher in every classroom by the end of the 2005–2006 school year, places added pressure on the District to have a system in place to attract and retain the most highly



qualified teachers. More than 3,000 candidates applied for 383 DCPS teaching positions for the 2003–04 school year; 99 new teachers, approximately one-fourth of the teachers hired, came in under the District’s provisional licensing authority. Sixty-four of the new teachers are D.C. Teaching Fellows, and 35 of the new teachers came through Teach for America.

During 2002, the seven approved D.C. teacher preparation programs had approximately 300 student teachers doing clinical teaching in DCPS schools. From this group, less than 20 were hired as new teachers by the DCPS for the 2003–04 school year.¹⁰

Although the DCPS was able to fill the 350 anticipated openings, the school system began the 2003–04 school year short 121 teachers due to last minute resignations. As evidenced by the numbers, the DCPS is able to recruit a large applicant pool. However,

Recognized Teacher Preparation Programs:

- 1) American University*
 - 2) Catholic University*
 - 3) George Washington University*
 - 4) Gallaudet University*
 - 5) Howard University*
 - 6) Trinity College**
 - 7) University of DC**
- * NCATE accredited
 ** Institution is candidate for NCATE accreditation

DCPS Teachers Earn Milken National Educator Awards

Four DCPS teachers recently received national recognition for their quality teaching, professional leadership, and engagement with families and the community. In 2003, Jonathan Jou, an English as a second language teacher at Jefferson Junior High School, and Kim Ables, a biology teacher at Banneker Academic High School were each awarded \$25,000 by the Milken National Educator Awards program. In 2004, the same award was given to Patricia Laporte, a pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten

teachers at John Tyler Elementary School, and to Laura Hills, a second grade teacher at Francis Scott Key Elementary School. The educators were recommended for the awards by a panel appointed by the DCPS superintendent.

Each year, the Milken National Educator Awards program recognizes 100 outstanding educators with a gift of \$25,000. The first awards were made in 1987, but 2003 was the first year that the program made awards to DCPS teachers.

The DCPS uses the Professional Performance Evaluation Process (PPEP) to evaluate teachers, a process that was informed by the work of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. The PPEP sets targets in the areas of student achievement, professional performance, and professional involvement. In addition, the PPEP has defined five broad teacher performance standards that refer to the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and actions that teachers must

show. Under PPEP standards, a teacher must:

1. Demonstrate commitment to students and their learning;
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the content and how to teach it;
3. Demonstrate the ability to manage and monitor student learning;
4. Make effective contributions to the total school program; and
5. Fulfill professional duties and responsibilities.

“Good principals understand that every child is a potential scholar and see, as the principal’s role, that of helping teachers and parents to unlock the mysteries that will help students reach their potential. Like good classroom teachers, good principals are wizards, magicians, actors, physicians, physicists, mathematicians, and chefs — all rolled into one”

—Linda Moore, Executive Director, Elsie Whitlow Stokes
Community Freedom Public Charter School

policy barriers such as vacancy notification requirements and late budget timetables impede the hiring process by making it difficult to accurately predict the number of available positions.

The Board of Education is working to address these issues. In order to more accurately predict vacancies in a timely manner, the Board changed the date by which teachers and administrators are required to submit a notice of intent to retire from May 30 to April 15.¹¹ As a result, the DCPS Office of Human Resources knew of 100 more vacancies in spring 2004 than in spring 2003.¹² In addition, the Board is seeking approval on a second initiative that would remove financial incentives for

teachers who wait until October to retire.

A consensus exists among educators that well-executed professional development programs can increase teacher effectiveness and retention, especially in high-poverty schools. The DCPS requires that all teachers participate in a minimum of 15 hours of professional development every year. Little data are available on the kinds and quality of professional development offered to DCPS teachers.

In addition to professional development courses, new teachers need mentoring from well-trained, experienced teachers who can observe and demonstrate effective instructional practices for them. Last year, the DCPS provided 77 mentors for approximately 300 teachers new to the DCPS. Second- and third-year teachers were also assigned mentors. The number of mentors and the nature and quality of their training is unknown. According to DC VOICE, many of the new teacher mentors received little training in mentoring and were given little time outside their own classrooms to work with the new teachers assigned to them.¹³

Recently the D.C. Board of Education adopted a resolution calling for a new three-year phased-in induction program for those in the first three years of teaching. The first phase of the program begins in August 2004, and will include an orientation, a mentorship program, and cohort group interaction.

The D.C. Board of Education is considering the adoption of a new teacher evaluation process, a value-added system, which examines the degree to which

teachers helped their students increase their achievement on state tests during the year.

High-Quality School Leadership

Across the nation, there is a lack of agreement on what it takes to be a successful principal. Most districts require a substantial amount of teaching experience and extensive coursework in educational administration to qualify for a principal's license. There is growing interest in making it easier for talented individuals from other fields to become school principals.

The role of a principal is pivotal. The National Association of Elementary School Principals has defined six critical performance expectations for a strong principal. Principals should:

- Lead schools in a way that places student and adult learning at the center,
- Set high expectations and standards for student achievement,
- Demand content and instruction that ensure student achievement,
- Create a culture of adult learning,
- Use multiple sources of data as diagnostic tools, and
- Actively engage the community.

Although compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act does not specifically rest with the principal, NCLB indirectly places accountability for student achievement on him or her. It is the school leader who is expected to improve student achievement. The law calls for strong consequences, including school restructuring and state takeover of low-performing schools when



improved student achievement does not occur within specific time frames.

District licensure standards for principals require all DCPS principals to hold a D.C. Administrative Services Credential. The following are the criteria for obtaining such a credential:

1. Possesses a District teaching license;
2. Has three years of full-time teaching experience;
3. Completes a state-approved program in educational administration;
4. Possesses an advanced degree; and
5. Takes the ISLLC State Leaders Licensure Assessment, required since 2004.

The District of Columbia state licensure requirements for principals do not apply to the 40 District public charter school principals. Several charter school principals were formerly DCPS school principals.

District of Columbia Principal Assessment

The District, in partnership with five states, formed the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) to develop an assessment of the knowledge, skills, and abilities of prospective principals. Currently, 15 states, including the District, require the ISLLC assessment as part of the state licensure process for new principals.

While D.C. requires that all new principals take the ISLLC Assessment, a baseline for pass/fail scores has not been established because too few candidates have taken the test to determine statistical reliability.

Principal Evaluation Process

About one-fifth (28 out of 120 points) of a principal's performance assessment is tied to instructional leadership.

The second most significant responsibility for principals, based on number of points awarded, is organizational management and accountability (20 points).

Factors assessing school climate, professional development, and parent and community involvement account for 16 points each.

Effective communication and special education account for 12 points each.

Our School Leaders

The DCPS has 167 schools, each headed by a principal. Secondary schools and large elementary schools also have assistant principals. The leadership for a number of charter schools is shared between a principal and executive director or head of school.

Demographic and professional data for District public school principals are limited. The information below was gathered from a number of primarily Web-based sources. On the opening day of the 2003–04 school year, 26 principals were new to their schools. Two-thirds of the new principals were chosen from among 100 DCPS employees who applied for these jobs. One-third of the new administrators were hired from outside the DCPS from as far away as California.¹⁴

In the past three years, there have been about 100 principal turnovers in DCPS schools.¹⁵ High principal turnover is not unique to the District, as many school districts and states report high annual principal turnover rates.

Principal Recruitment, Retention, Training, and Evaluation

Professional development opportunities for principals include a three-day Principals' Leadership Academy conducted in

collaboration with the Council for Basic Education and the Laboratory for Student Success. The Leadership Academy focuses on strengthening a principal's understanding of content standards and standards-based instruction and also on how to be a school instructional leader. An academy for aspiring and emerging leaders was conducted in collaboration with the University of the District of Columbia until funding expired in 2001.

For the first time this year, the DCPS has partnered with New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS), an organization that helps urban school districts recruit and train prospective principals.

The DCPS has instituted a fairly structured principal evaluation process. The Council of the Great City Schools, in its December 2003 Strategic Support Team Report, indicates that DCPS principals are the only group in the school system who are held accountable for student achievement.

In this chapter we have discussed: 1) definitions of high-quality teachers and principals, 2) effects of high-quality teachers on student achievement, and 3) District efforts to recruit, retain, train, and evaluate teachers and principals. The next chapter will examine how achievement is measured and how well our students are doing.

New Leaders for New Schools Program

Launched in early 2003 with support from key D.C. leaders, the New Leaders for New Schools program placed 10 principals-in-training in yearlong residencies with veteran D.C. principals. The 10 schools where the trainees have been placed include six DCPS schools (Banneker Senior High; Browne Junior High; Capitol Hill Cluster Schools; and Raymond, Miner, and Hyde elementary schools) and four charter schools (School for the Arts in Learning (SAIL), Maya Angelou, Elsie Whitlow Stokes

Community Freedom, and Capital City Public Charter School). After they graduate from the NLNS program, these trainees are expected to become members of a highly skilled next generation of school leaders in DCPS.

The 10 trainees are from diverse backgrounds and experience. Six are former teachers (four from DCPS schools), and four are from the business and nonprofit sectors. NLNS hopes to recruit 20 principals-in-training for the 2004–05 school year.

If you want to learn more about our teachers and principals:

State Report 2003 District of Columbia Title II

<http://www.title2.org/data.htm>

Meeting the Highly Qualified Teachers Challenge: The Secretary's Second Annual Report on Teacher Quality

<http://www.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/teachprep/2003title-ii-report.pdf>

DC Voice New Teacher Survey, June 2003

www.dcvoice.org/research/NewTeacherSurveySummaryReport.pdf

Restoring Excellence to the District of Columbia Public Schools

<http://www.cgcs.org/pdfs/DCPSReportFinal.pdf>

Chapter Notes

- 1 W.L. Sanders and J.C. Rivers, *Cumulative and Residual Effects of Teachers on Future Student Academic Achievement*, University of Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center (1996).
- 2 W.L. Sanders and J.C. Rivers, 1996.
- 3 U.S. Department of Education, Office of Policy Planning and Innovation, *Meeting the Highly Qualified Teachers Challenge: The Secretary's Second Annual Report on Teacher Quality*, Washington, D.C., 2003.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 D.C. Goldhaber and D.J. Brewer. 1999. (Eds.) Chester E. Finn Jr. and Marc Kanstrom. From *Meeting the Highly Qualified Teachers Challenge*, 2002 and K. Walsh, 2001. The Abell Foundation. From *Meeting the Highly Qualified Teachers Challenge*, 2002.
- 6 "Attracting the Best and Brightest," *Education Week. Quality Counts*. 2000.
- 7 Karen Jackson, DCPS Office of Human Resources. This figure includes resource teachers and counselors.
- 8 As defined in Section 111(h)(1)(C)(viii) of the ESEA, "high poverty" school refers to the schools in the top quartile of poverty in the state.
- 9 D.C. Goldhaber and D.J. Brewer. 1999. (Eds.) Chester E. Finn Jr. and Marc Kanstrom. From *Meeting the Highly Qualified Teachers Challenge*, 2002 and K. Walsh, 2001. The Abell Foundation. From *Meeting the Highly Qualified Teachers Challenge*, 2002.
- 10 Interview with Ken Bungert, DCPS Office of Academic Credentials, Jan. 16, 2004.
- 11 March 11, 2004. Minutes from the Special Meeting of the Board of Education.
- 12 Julie Mikuta, District of Columbia Board of Education, District One Representative. May 14, 2004.¹³"Teachers Worn Out, Ready to Leave Within Three Years." *The DC VOICE: Strengthening the Public Voice in Education*, Winter 2003.
- 14 Council of the Great City Schools, December 2003.
- 15 Council of the Great City Schools, December 2003.



CHAPTER FOUR

student outcomes

The measure of schools is the academic growth of their students.

Student achievement in the District of Columbia Public Schools and public charter schools is, on average, low. Significant differences exist in the achievement of students based on race, ethnicity, income level, home language, and special needs. Evidence suggests that there have been limited gains in student achievement over the past few years.

In 2002, the District of Columbia established goals for student performance in response to the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Previous chapters discussed the factors that directly impact student achievement, such as the rigor of curriculum and the quality of teachers and school leaders. They also outlined the characteristics of our students and the nature of their needs. The city's public schools will need to make substantial improvements to raise achievement for all students, reduce inequities, and meet the city's academic goals.

This chapter uses multiple measures to examine student achievement. The chapter begins with a snapshot of public school performance on standardized assessments in 2003 and then uses trend data to examine how performance has changed over the past

five years. Included in this chapter is a look at gaps in performance among different groups of students within the District of Columbia. The next section compares the performance of public school students in the District of Columbia to students in urban districts across the country. This is followed by a discussion of progress toward meeting the goals established in response to the No Child Left Behind Act. The chapter concludes with information about student performance on college entrance exams and subject-area tests, as well as rates of high school graduation and postsecondary attainment.

Student Achievement in Spring 2003

District students enrolled in grades 3–11 of every public school, both traditional and charter, take the same standardized exam every spring—the 9th Edition of the Stanford Achievement Test, known as the

Stanford-9. This test measures student achievement in the basic skills of reading and mathematics. It is a valuable measurement tool because it is the only test taken by students in all public schools in the District of Columbia. One way of measuring students' performance on the test is the students'

Stanford Achievement Test-9th Edition

The Stanford-9 is one of the most commonly used education assessments in the United States. It is taken by students enrolled in all DCPS and public charter schools. It has been used for a number of years in the District and elsewhere across the nation to track student achievement at individual schools. The DCPS adopted a school accountability policy in 2003 that relies on results of the Stanford-9 as the primary indicator of student achievement over the next few years. Under an agreement with the U.S. Department of Education, the Stanford-9 will be replaced starting in school year 2004–05 by a new assessment using criteria tied to the District of Columbia Standards for Teaching and Learning.

In past years, the DCPS and other school districts generally reported Stanford-9 results as scale scores, percentiles and/or by achievement categories (e.g. below basic, basic, proficient, advanced). Increasingly, school districts are reporting students'

performance using Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) scores. NCE scores are designed for easy comparison of scores, including across grades and schools, or against a nationally representative sample. NCE scores are particularly useful for a newly emerging technique known as "value added" analysis, which compares an individual student's performance year-to-year on the Stanford-9 or other tests. These data can then be aggregated to show progress that a student makes while enrolled in a particular classroom or school. The Public Charter School Board has reported such data for the past few years, identifying the percent of students in a school that post positive year-to-year NCE gains, and the average NCE gains of all students. The DCPS recently installed a data management system that will help with such analysis. Over time, this type of analysis should help provide greater understanding of student performance than the "single-moment-in-time" analysis presented here.

Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) scores. NCE scores are designed for easy comparison of scores, in this case with all other students who take this exam nationally. A score of more than 50 means that a student scored in the top half of all scores in the country; below 50 represents the bottom half. The scores are consistent across all grade levels—a student scoring 64 on the 4th grade test falls in the same place compared with all other students taking the 4th grade test as does a student scoring 64 on the 8th grade test in relation to all other students taking the 8th grade test.

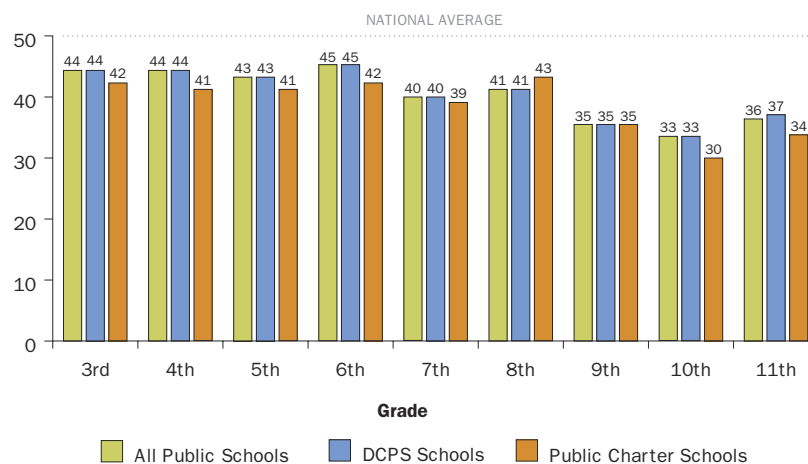
In spring 2003, students enrolled in the city's public schools scored below the national average in reading in all grades on the Stanford-9. Exhibit 17 shows spring 2003 Stanford-9 reading results by grade for all students who took the tests in DCPS schools and public charter schools.¹ District students' NCE scores in reading generally were stable from grades 3 through 6, slightly below the national average. Students' scores in the 7th and 8th grades were generally even further below the national average. In 9th through 11th grades, District students fell dramatically behind their peers nationally.

The cause of these trends across grades is difficult to determine, as we lack reliable information on changes in the student population as they advance in grades. We know that students are highly mobile, with some moving between different public, charter, and private schools multiple times in their academic career, sometimes leaving the District and sometimes returning at different points in their childhood. This high mobility in the public school population affects the average student performance in different grade levels due to the changes in the student population represented in each grade. This is particularly true in the high school grades, where public school enrollment decreases significantly each year after 9th grade (see chapter 2 for additional enrollment data).

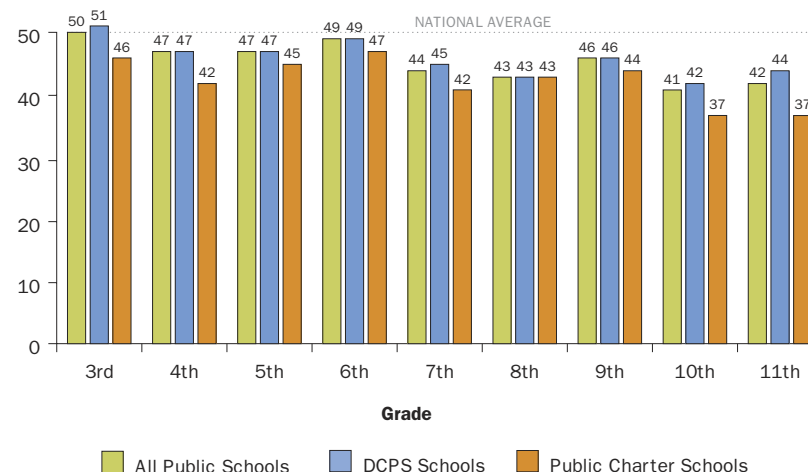
Exhibit 17: Average NCE Scores of Public School Students in the District of Columbia by Grade, Stanford-9 Reading and Mathematics Tests Spring 2003

The average reading and mathematics scores of public school students in the District of Columbia were lower than the national average, with the exception of DCPS 3rd graders on the math exam. In general, students in public charter schools scored below students in the DCPS on the reading and mathematics exams, except for 8th grade. Good data on the factors that contribute to this were not available for this report although it is intended that future reports will contain data that permit an examination of the success of individual schools in raising student achievement.²

READING



MATHEMATICS



Data Sources: The DCPS Division of Accountability and the D.C. Public Charter School Board.

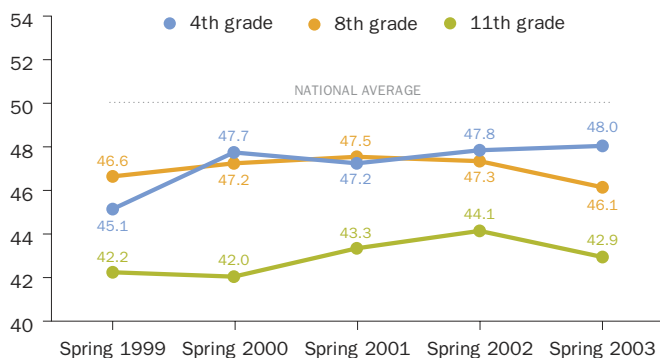
Trends in Student Achievement over the Past Five Years

To examine more closely how District students are performing over time, this section reports five years of achievement data for DCPS general education students in grades 4, 8, and 11.³ These three grade levels are important milestones in students'

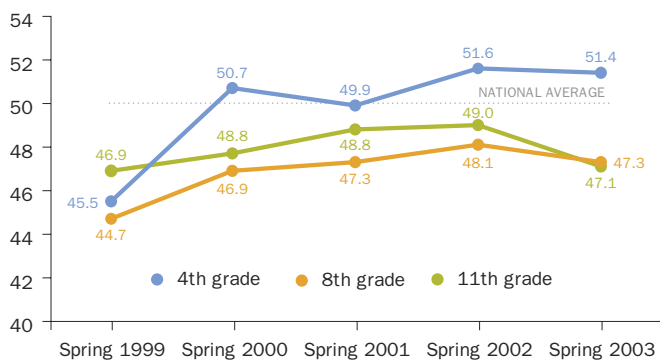
Exhibit 18: Average NCE Scores of DCPS General Education Students on Stanford-9 Reading and Mathematics Tests, Spring 1999–2003

Average scores received by 4th grade DCPS general education students have increased in both reading and mathematics over the past four years, rising above the national average in mathematics for three of the last five years. Scores in the 8th grade have remained similar over the past four years in reading, but showed three years of consistent growth in mathematics before dipping slightly in 2003. Average scores in math for 11th grade students also grew for three years, decreasing in 2003.

READING



MATHEMATICS



Data Source: The DCPS Division of Accountability.

High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools

Despite the discouraging association of poverty with low student academic achievement, several public schools in the District exhibit both high average student achievement on the Stanford-9 test and very high levels of student poverty. Serving populations in which 70-93% of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, these 13 schools outperformed half of the nation's test-takers in both mathematics and reading, posting average combined reading and math NCE scores of at least 110. The 12 DCPS elementary schools and one public charter middle school represent every ward of the city.

Bancroft, Barnard, Burrville, Cleveland, Draper, Drew, Hendley, KIPP DC: KEY Academy (Public Charter Middle School), Noyes, Randle Highlands, Ross, Simon, Stoddert

academic careers, as they advance from early elementary to upper elementary grades, as they leave middle school, and when they are on the verge of graduation from high school. These three grades were also selected due to the availability of comparable data for other urban school systems around the country. For consistency, data is reported for these grades throughout the remainder of this chapter.

Trend data is reported only for the DCPS, as it is not currently available for public charter schools. The DCPS trend data does not include results from English language learners or students in need of special education services because in the past the DCPS tested only a portion of these students.

Increases in DCPS general education students' average scores in 4th, 8th, and 11th grades brought the DCPS closer to the national average on the Stanford-9 reading and mathematics tests each year from 1999 to 2002.

Exhibit 18 shows that with the exception of 4th grade reading scores, in these three grades there was a decrease in DCPS students' scores relative to the national average in 2003. This was consistent with the average scores across all DCPS grades in reading, which decreased in 2003, while average mathematics scores were level.

The Achievement Gap

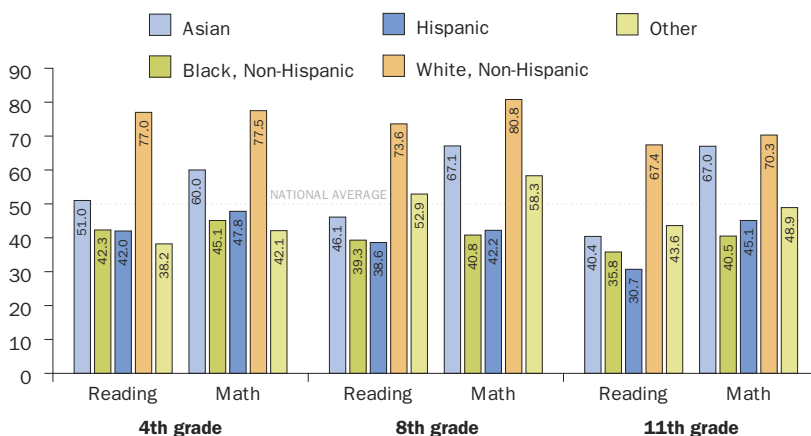
The challenge of closing gaps in the achievement between students of color and White students, as well as low-income and affluent students, poses an enormous challenge to public schools in the District of Columbia. These gaps, as well as those associated with language and special education status, exist in schools across the country. The District's high number of public school students of color, low-income students, English language learners, and special education students make these challenges even more acutely felt here.

For the past 50 years, federal and local programs have striven to improve student achievement among poor and minority

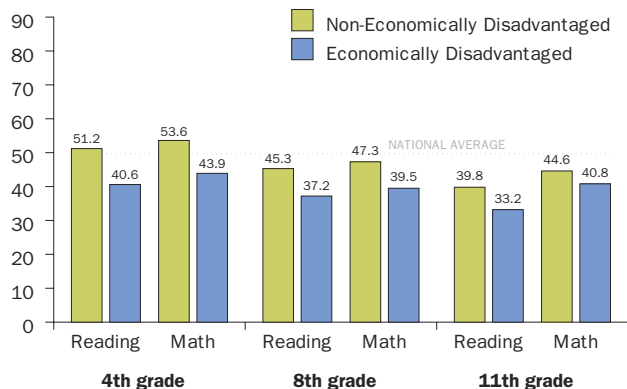
Exhibit 19: Average NCE Scores of Students Attending a DCPS School or a Board of Education Charter School on Stanford-9 Reading and Mathematics Tests, Spring 2003

Achievement on standardized tests varies between students in different demographic groups. The gaps are apparent among students of different race or ethnicity, socioeconomic status, special education status, and level of English proficiency.

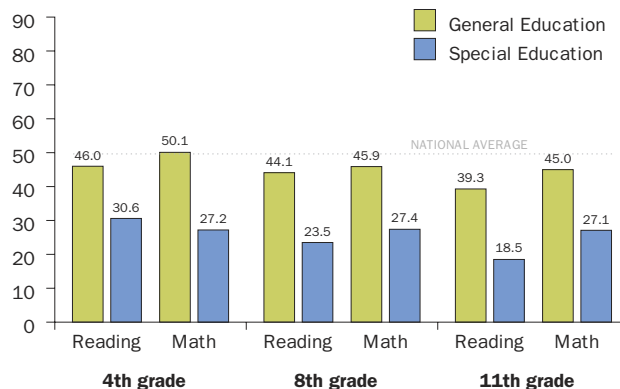
RACE OR ETHNICITY



ECONOMIC STATUS⁶



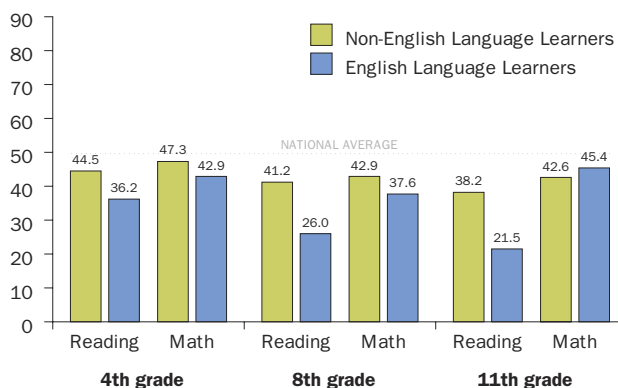
SPECIAL EDUCATION STATUS



students by desegregating schools, providing additional resources to high-poverty schools, and developing strategies for students whose home language is not English. Despite these programs, there remains a significant gap in the District of Columbia between the average achievement of students in different groups on the Stanford-9 and other assessments.

The No Child Left Behind Act requires school systems and individual schools to report achievement data for each of these demographic groups and to strive toward improving achievement for all students. The graphs in Exhibit 19 present average Stanford-9 NCE achievement scores by various demographic groupings for students attending DCPS schools or Board of Education charter schools.⁴ This is the first year such data has been compiled to establish a baseline from which, in future reports, we will be able to examine the progress schools

LANGUAGE STATUS



Data Source: The DCPS Division of Accountability.

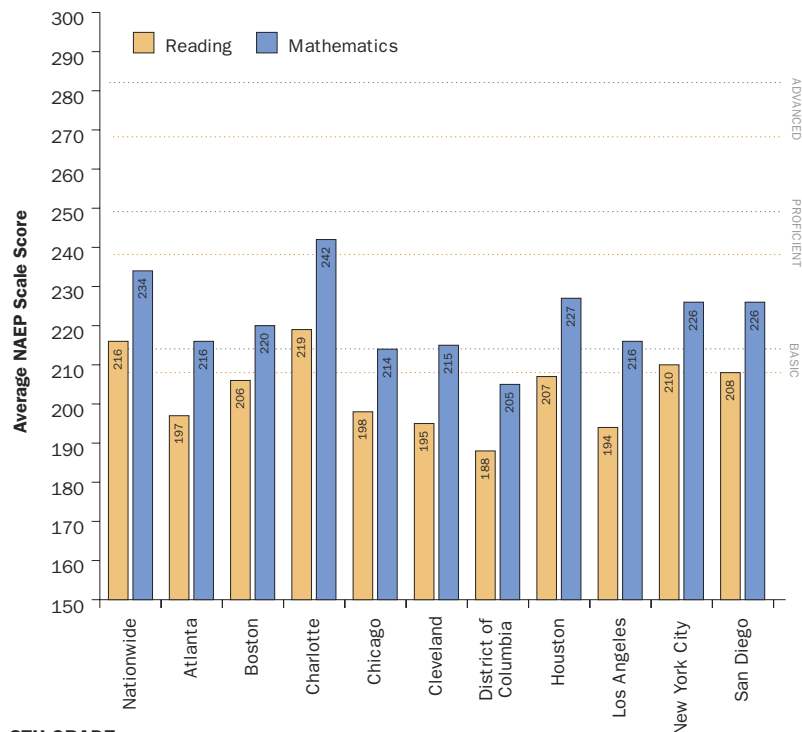
make in the future to close the gaps and raise the achievement of all students.⁵

In the District of Columbia, the gaps appear to be largest between students in different racial and ethnic groups. **In 4th, 8th, and 11th grade reading and math, White students have an average NCE that is at least 25 points higher**

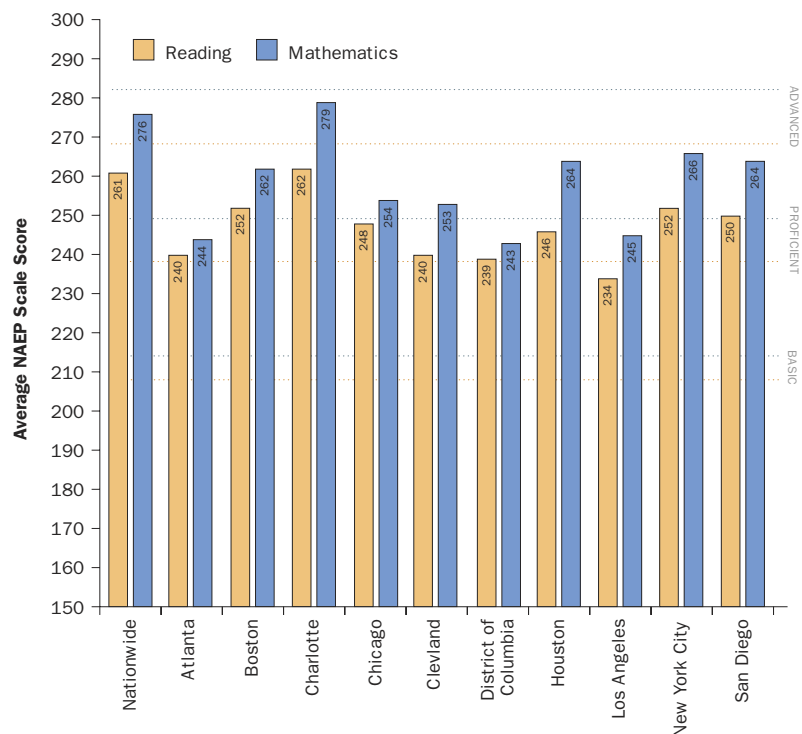
Exhibit 20: Average 4th and 8th Grade Scale Scores in Urban Districts, NAEP Reading and Mathematics Tests, Spring 2003

A representative sample of District of Columbia students in grades 4 and 8, on average, scored lower in both reading and mathematics than did their counterparts in each of the comparison cities, with one exception: Grade 8 students in the District scored higher in reading than those in Los Angeles.

4TH GRADE



8TH GRADE



Data Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *The Nation's Report Card: Trial Urban District Assessment Snapshot Reports*, 2004.

than any of their Black or Hispanic counterparts. A second gap exists among students of different economic status. Fourth grade students who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch based on low family income have an average NCE score that is 10 points lower than those who do not, however, this gap is much narrower for students in 11th grade.

District of Columbia Student Performance Compared with Other Cities

Public school students in the District of Columbia, on average, scored lower in both reading and mathematics at both the 4th and 8th grade levels than did their counterparts in nine other large urban school districts in Spring 2003. The one exception was on the 8th grade reading exam, where students in Los Angeles scored, on average, below students in the District of Columbia. The assessment used was the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), one of the few tests yielding data that can be compared reliably across the nation. Two core NAEP tests measure students' understanding of specific mathematics content, as well as basic reading skills. NAEP tests in other content areas, including science, writing, U.S. history, civics, geography, and the arts are periodically administered nationwide. NAEP is a criterion-referenced test, in that student scores represent how well a student demonstrates knowledge of specific content and skills. In contrast, the Stanford-9 is a norm-referenced test that compares a student's score against the scores of students who have already taken the exam. NAEP is administered to representative samples of public school students in all states at regular intervals.

A representative sample of approximately 40 percent of 4th and 8th grade students in traditional and charter schools in the District took the NAEP reading and mathematics examination in spring 2003 as part of a new initiative called the Trial Urban District

Assessment (TUDA). Nine other large urban school districts also voluntarily participated in order to produce data for comparison purposes.

On both the mathematics and the reading tests, the city's 4th graders, on average, scored lower than the average 4th grade scores for each of the other nine urban school districts⁷ as displayed in Exhibit 20. This is true even if one looks solely at 4th grade Black students' performance on the reading test in the nine cities.⁸

On the mathematics test, the District's 8th grade students' average scores were lower than the averages for each of the other participating school districts, though within 2 points of both Los Angeles and Atlanta. On the reading test, the District's 8th grade average scores were lower than the averages for each of the other participating school districts except Los Angeles. Both Cleveland and Atlanta averaged less than 2 points more than the District in 8th grade reading.⁹ Among Black students, District 8th grade students scored, on average, above their counterparts in Los Angeles and within 2 points of the average for Black students in Atlanta, San Diego, and Cleveland.¹⁰

Despite their overall poor NAEP performance in spring 2003, the District's 4th grade students have shown progress in reading over the past five years, with the average 2003 reading score 9 points higher than the 1998 average. Compared with other states, the District had the third-largest average gain on the 4th grade reading test. This gain represented a small closing of the achievement gap—Black students gained 10 points between spring 1998 and spring 2003. Latino students registered a 14-point gain, placing the District in fifth place among states in raising average scale scores by Latino students.¹¹

The average score of the District's 8th grade students on the NAEP mathematics test also increased over time. They scored 9 points higher on the mathematics test in 2003 compared with 2000. Compared with other states, the District had the second-largest average gain on the 8th grade reading test.



Basic Achievement on the NAEP Test

Average scores on the NAEP often are reported as falling in one of four achievement categories: below basic, basic, proficient, or advanced. District of Columbia public school students who took the NAEP reading and mathematics tests in 2003, on average, scored below NAEP's basic achievement category. In grades 4 and 8, on both mathematics and reading tests, approximately one-third of District public school students achieved basic or higher.

ACHIEVEMENT-LEVEL POLICY DEFINITIONS

BASIC	Partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at each grade.
PROFICIENT	Solid academic performance for each grade assessed. Students reaching this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter.
ADVANCED	Superior performance.

Black students gained 8 points between 2000 and 2003. **Latino students registered a 22-point gain, placing the District in first place among states in raising average scale scores by Latino students.**¹²

While these gains are important, they still leave the District well below the comparison districts.

Progress toward Meeting Citywide Goals

In response to federal No Child Left Behind legislation, the D.C. Board of Education

The federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act requires the District of Columbia to establish an accountability system to ensure that each DCPS school and public charter school is meeting achievement goals. These goals include student performance in reading and mathematics, student performance in science (starting in the 2007–08 school year), student attendance in elementary and middle schools, and high school graduation rates. These data are reported for every school, and each school must meet its “Adequate Yearly Progress” target (AYP) toward 100 percent of students meeting the city’s goals. To achieve AYP, a schools’ students must score above a certain level on the Stanford-9.

In addition, a school must show that students in certain demographic groups meet the performance goals. These include students of different races, ethnicities, family income levels, English language proficiency, and special education status. In order to achieve AYP, students in all of these categories must meet the annual performance goals in both reading and math. In addition, schools must test at least 95 percent of the students in each category in both reading and math. A school does not achieve AYP if it falls short on any one measure. Thus there are

some three dozen ways for a school to fail to achieve AYP.

Schools with high percentages of students in poverty receive extra federal funding (Title I) to combat obstacles to raising student performance. These schools are subject to sanctions if they fail to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for two years in a row. They are then designated as schools “in need of improvement” and must provide the option for students to transfer to higher-performing schools. Using earlier criteria, 36 schools are currently on DCPS’ “in need of improvement” list. The 49 schools recently identified as failing to meet AYP for school year 2003–04 must meet AYP for school year 2004–05 in order to avoid being placed on the “in need of improvement” list. If a school remains unable to achieve AYP, increasing levels of interventions apply, including the possibility of: 1) mandatory tutoring and other education services from outside providers; 2) schoolwide curriculum and staff changes; 3) outside experts advising the school; or 3) extended school year or school day. After five years on an improvement list, DCPS or a charter school’s authorizer can take drastic steps to overhaul a school’s governance through means such as contracting out for school management or converting the school to charter status.

passed policies in 2003 that established reading and mathematics performance goals for all students attending public schools in the District of Columbia. The policies set annual goals for student performance on the Stanford-9. By the end of the 2013–14 school year, every student attending a DCPS school or public charter school in the District of Columbia is expected to demonstrate “proficiency” on a test of reading and mathematics. Between now and 2014, intermediate goals have been set to measure whether schools make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) toward meeting the goal of 100 percent proficiency. The goals

for the percent of students who must achieve proficiency rise every other year. The goals rose in 2004, and will rise again in 2006. On average students have met the current goals. In order to achieve future goals, student performance will need to improve dramatically.

The DCPS Office of Accountability this spring released NCLB performance information for the DCPS for the first time. Of the 151 schools for which school year 2002–03 reports are available, 83 (55 percent) fell below the 2003 intermediate goal on at least one measure, and thus failed to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress.¹³ Many schools

Defining Proficiency

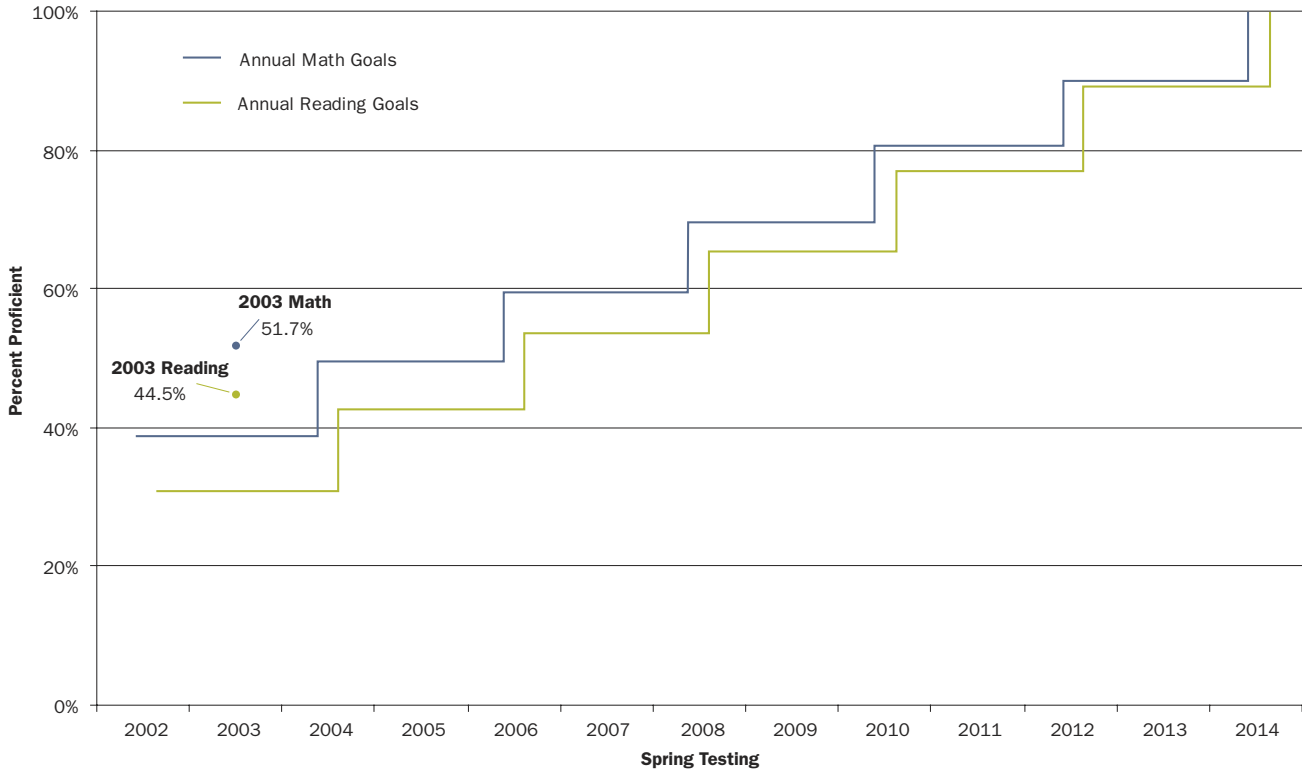
The D.C. Board of Education has defined “proficient” as any score at or above the 40th percentile (equivalent to a 44.7 NCE score) on the Stanford-9. The initial city goals for the percent of students who must achieve proficiency were based on the scores of students performing in the lowest 20 percent of students in the city. However, the Stanford-9 will be replaced by a new, criterion-referenced test in the 2004–05 school year. As a result, the definition of proficiency and the goals for the next few years are likely to change. In addition, an alternative

assessment will be used starting in spring 2004 for students that score “non English proficient” on an English language proficiency test. See District of Columbia Public Schools, Consolidated State Application Accountability Workbook, Revised Submission (Washington, D.C.: District of Columbia Public Schools): June 3, 2003. Starting in the 2007–08 school year, students will need to demonstrate proficiency on science assessments at least three times during their primary and secondary schooling.

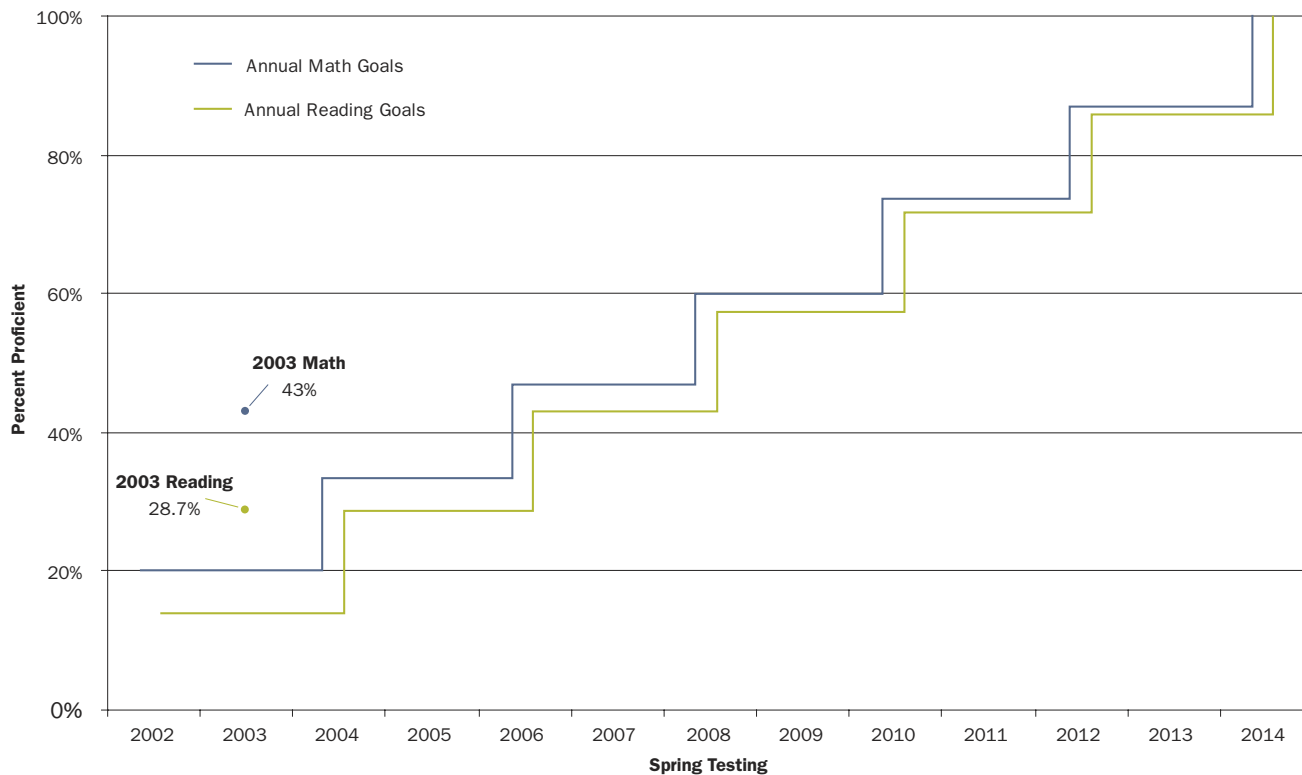
Exhibit 21: Progress Toward Meeting D.C. Mathematics and Reading Goals for Elementary Students (Grades 3–8) and Secondary Students (Grades 9–11)

Overall, public elementary and secondary students citywide have met the 2003–04 goals for reading and mathematics. Significant improvement is necessary for the District to continue to meet its goals. The annual goals are based on the percentage of students taking the Stanford-9 who scored at the 40th percentile (equivalent to a 44.7 NCE) or higher.

ELEMENTARY STUDENTS (GRADES 3–8)



SECONDARY STUDENTS (GRADES 9–11)



Data Source: DCPS Division of Accountability.

Through the “Transformation Schools” initiative, the DCPS already has attempted schoolwide curriculum and staff changes at 17 schools. In 2001, nine DCPS schools were identified that had been receiving additional assistance for four years and had not yet demonstrated significant gains in student achievement. These transformation schools were intended to serve as examples of how to “rapidly, intentionally, and effectively transform identified schools from low performing to high performing.” In 2002, five more schools were designated as “transformation schools,” and three schools were added to the list in 2003.

Each of the transformation schools was assigned a new principal, and the staff was reconfigured to include two instructional facilitators. With the support of professional development programs, each school staff implemented a comprehensive school reform model that prescribed strategies for the organization and leadership structure of the school, alignment of instructional systems, and improved parent/guardian and community involvement in the school. Because the initiative is relatively young, it is difficult to ascertain the effectiveness of the reforms. Preliminary results show positive gains; test scores seem to be rising, while the frequency of special education referrals and disciplinary incidences are declining.

did not receive AYP because they did not test enough students in each of the demographic categories. Virginia and Maryland also recently determined that many schools failed to meet their states’ performance goals—41 percent in Virginia (740 schools)¹⁴ and 37 percent in Maryland (525 schools).¹⁵

Dramatic improvement in student reading levels at most elementary schools will be needed over the next two years to meet the spring 2006 goal of 53.5 percent of students achieving proficient scores. For the elementary grades, the District’s reading goal for the 2002–03 school year was that 30.3 percent of students should demonstrate proficiency on the Stanford-9 exam. For the 2003–04 school year, that goal rose to 41.9 percent. Students attending the city’s public schools are, as a whole, already above that

goal—44.5 percent of elementary students who took the reading test received proficient scores on the spring 2003 exam.¹⁶ However, many schools, and groups within these schools, fall below this goal.

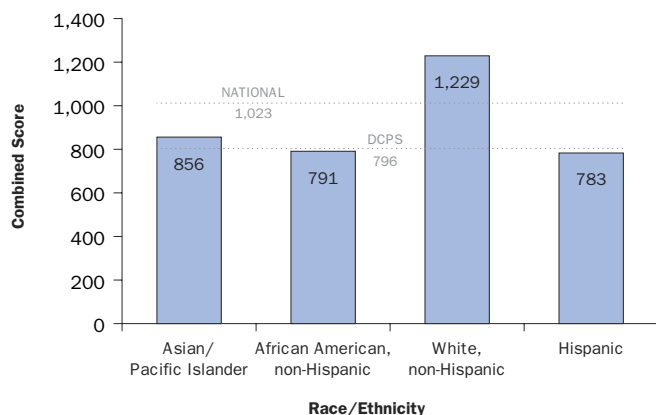
In mathematics, 51.7 percent of elementary students taking the spring 2003 exam received proficient scores, exceeding the 38.4 percent goal for the 2002–03 school year and the 48.7 percent goal for the 2003–04 school year. This goal will rise to 58.9 percent in the 2005–06 school year, necessitating short-term improvement in math scores for many schools and groups within schools.

Secondary students citywide have met the 2003–04 goals for mathematics—43 percent received proficient scores in spring 2003.¹⁷ The mathematics goals for secondary students in the 2002–03 and 2003–04 school years were 19.8 percent and 33.2 percent, respectively. Over the next two years, secondary students will need to raise their mathematics scores moderately so that the city reaches its spring 2006 goal when 46.5 percent of secondary students must demonstrate proficiency.

In reading, however, many secondary students will need to improve their scores for the District to continue to meet its goals. Of secondary students citywide taking the reading test, 28.7 percent received proficient scores in spring 2003, exceeding the goals for 2002–03 (13.7 percent) and 2003–04 (28.1 percent). However, by 2006 that goal will increase to 42.5 percent of students.

Exhibit 22: Average Combined SAT Scores for DCPS Students by Race/Ethnicity, SY 2002–03

Although the average SAT scores of DCPS students vary by race and ethnicity, the overall DCPS average is more than 200 points below the national average.



Data Source: DCPS News Release, Aug. 26, 2003.

Preparing Students for Postsecondary Education

Over the past few years, the DCPS has encouraged more students to take the SAT as part of an effort to promote college attendance among its students.

The SAT is the most widely used college admissions exam. Most four-year colleges, and some two-year colleges, require students to take a college admissions exam. The number of DCPS students taking the SAT rose 18 percent from 1,684 in the 2000–01 school year to 1,994 in the 2002–03 school year.¹⁸ Over the past three years scores have remained steady, despite the increase in the number of students taking the exam. Given that similar students would not have been encouraged in the past to take the SAT due to lower academic performance, the steady scores are positive. Recent information about DCPS student performance on the SAT is presented in Exhibit 22.

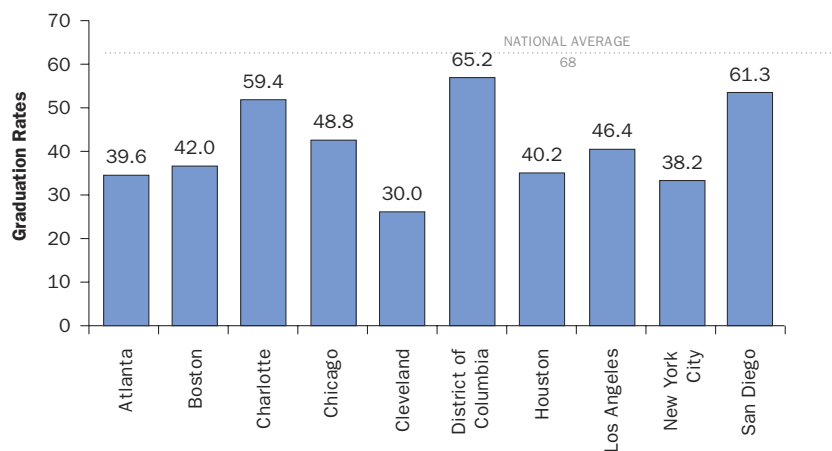
The DCPS also has encouraged more students to take subject area Advanced Placement (AP) tests, with nearly twice as many exams taken in the 2002–03 school year than five years previously—1,318 compared with 743 (See sidebar page 29).¹⁹ AP classes and exams are taken by many college-bound students who desire to get college recognition for challenging classes they take during high school. AP tests are graded on a 5-point scale. Many colleges will accept scores of 3, 4, or 5 as equivalent to passing a college-level course (e.g. for completing prerequisites). In the 2002–03 school year, 34 percent of the scores on exams taken by DCPS students were 3 or higher.²⁰

A high school diploma is, arguably, one of the most important indicators today of future economic security. Unemployment is 50 percent higher among high school dropouts than their peers who graduate.²¹ Even when high school dropouts obtain full-time work, their median income is one-quarter lower than a full-time worker who received a high school diploma.²²

In 2000, the U.S. Census found that, in the District of Columbia, one in 10 young people

Exhibit 23: Estimated Percent of Students Obtaining a High School Diploma in Four Years

According to the Urban Institute, 65.2 percent of DCPS students entering 9th grade will obtain a high school diploma in four years, a rate that is slightly lower than the national average, but higher than rates in the nine urban school districts for which we reported NAEP data earlier.



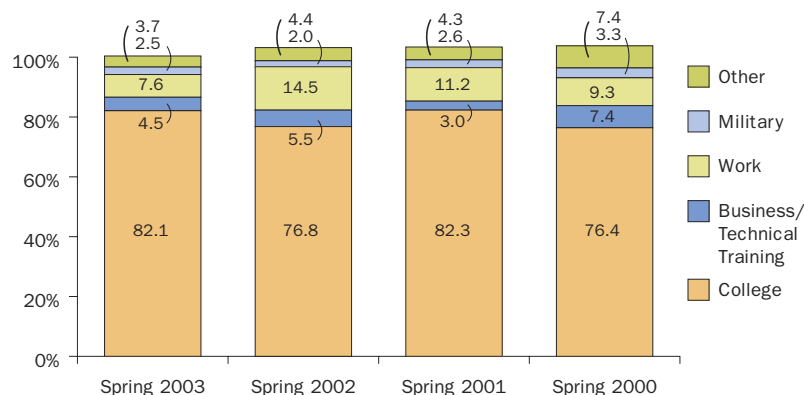
Data Source: The Urban Institute, 2004.

ages 16 to 19 without high school degrees were not enrolled in school. Among Black youths without high school diplomas, more than one in nine were not enrolled in school and only one in five out-of-school youths were working. The census recorded extremely high numbers of Latino youths in the District without high school diplomas who were not in school—more than three in 10. Of these out-of-school Latino youths, nearly two-thirds were working.²³ A recent study of educational



Exhibit 24: DCPS Spring Graduates' Post-Graduation Plans as Reported to High School Guidance Counselors, Spring 2000–2003

Over the past four years, nearly 80 percent of DCPS spring graduates reported to their guidance counselors that they planned to enroll in college the following fall.²⁹ Unfortunately this survey cannot tell us whether they are accepted to college, whether they can afford to attend, or whether they are ready to succeed in college if they attend.



Note: Some percentages do not add to 100 because a fraction of students gave more than one response.
Data Source: DCPS Division of Guidance and Counseling Services, Office of the Chief Academic Officer.

opportunities for Latinos in the District suggested a variety of causes, including: extreme family poverty driving young people to work; residency requirements that limit postsecondary education opportunities for undocumented immigrants; school programs that fail to meet their language needs; and fear of violence.²⁴

As shown in Exhibit 23, the Urban Institute recently estimated that only 65.2 percent of DCPS students entering grade 9 will obtain a high school diploma in four years, given the conditions prevailing in the DCPS during the 2000–01 school year. Their estimates did not include data from charter schools. **Nevertheless, this was a significantly higher graduation rate than that of any of the nine urban school districts we reported NAEP data for earlier.** The estimated national average is 68 percent.

The Urban Institute estimated a nearly 20 percent gap between male and female students in the District, with young men graduating at a rate of 54.8 percent, compared with 74 percent for young women. Nationally, Black and Latino students are estimated to graduate at rates of 50.2 percent and 53.2 percent, respectively. Similar racial and ethnic graduation gaps are likely to exist

in the District, though the Urban Institute was unable to produce a reliable race/ethnicity estimate for the District.²⁵ Starting this summer, the DCPS will begin to use high school graduation rates as one of the AYP measures for secondary schools. The Board of Education's accountability policy uses a definition that relies upon the number of dropouts over preceding years. Accurately recording dropout statistics is difficult for many school systems, and there have been recent reports of abuse of dropout reporting systems in school districts across the country.²⁶

Postsecondary Educational Attainment

Only 17.3 percent of young people ages 18 to 24 from low-income families in the District were estimated to be in college during the 2001–02 school year. Nationwide, the low-income college participation rate was 24 percent.²⁷ In the 21st century in the United States, a postsecondary education is increasingly important for individuals to succeed economically and socially. According to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, a college graduate can expect to earn 70 percent more on average than a person with only a high school diploma. Federal employment projections for the next ten years estimate that 40 percent of all new jobs will require at least an associate's degree.²⁸ College participation is especially important for students from low-income families who hope to improve their economic condition as adults.

District guidance counselors, over the past four years, collected information on the plans for about 90 percent of the spring graduates. The counselors recorded the information, noting whether each graduate had plans to enroll in college (including two- and four-year degree programs); attend a business or technical training program; work; join the military; or other activities or undefined plans. The counselors' findings appear in Exhibit 24.

Between 1998 and 2002, the number of D.C. high school graduates who

enrolled for the first time in a college or university increased by 28 percent.³⁰

The nationwide increase during this time period was only 5 percent. This increase has been facilitated by two major efforts at easing the financial burden of students interested in attending college: the federal Tuition Assistance Grant (TAG) program, administered by the State Education Office; and the privately funded D.C. College Access Program (DC-CAP). Over the past five years, TAG has disbursed \$63 million in college tuition grants to more than 6,500 students. During the same period, DC-CAP disbursed \$5 million in scholarships and provided college counseling services in all D.C. public

high schools and tracking and counseling to students who enroll in college.

In this chapter we have discussed the:

1) overall low performance of public school students on standardized tests, 2) significant increases in student scores on the NAEP, 3) achievement gaps between students in different demographic groups, 4) multiple measures by which schools are held accountable under federal legislation, and 5) increasing number of public high school graduates who enroll in a college or university. The next chapter will examine how public schools are funded and how those funds are spent.

If you want to learn more about student outcomes:

A Five-Year Statistical Glance at DC Public Schools, School Years 1998–99 through 2002–03 (available from DCPS Office of Accountability)

DCPS No Child Left Behind Report Cards
silicon.k12.dc.us/NCLB

DC Public Charter School Board 2003 School Performance Reports
www.dcpubliccharter.com/communityint/reports/spr2003.htm

DC Board of Education Charters – School Report Cards
www.dcboecharters.org/report.asp

District of Columbia School Search
dcschoolsearch.dc.gov

Trial Urban District Assessment Snapshot Reports
nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard

Closing the Achievement Gap: 2003 NAEP Reading and Math Results Show Real Results and Remaining Challenges, November 2003.
www.edtrust.org/

Consolidated State Application Accountability Workbook, Revised Submission, June 3, 2003
www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/stateplans03/dccsa.pdf

The State of Latinos in the District of Columbia: Trends, Consequences, and Recommendations, September 2002
www.consejo.org/publications.html

Who Graduates? Who Doesn't? A Statistical Portrait of Public High School Graduation, Class of 2001
www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=410934

Public High School Graduation and College Readiness Rates in the United States, Education Working Paper No. 3
www.manhattan-institute.org/html/ewp_03.htm

Closing the Graduation Gap: Toward High Schools That Prepare All Students for College, Work, and Citizenship
gatesfoundation.org/nr/downloads/ed/policy.pdf

College Participation Rates for Students From Low-Income Families by State 1992–93 to 2000–02
www.postsecondary.org/archives/Reports/Spreadsheets/ParticLowIncome.htm

Chapter Notes

- 1 Data from DCPS Division of Accountability and the D.C. Public Charter School Board, analyzed by the D.C. State Education Office. Unless otherwise mentioned, figures quoted include *all* students who took the Stanford-9 test, including language minorities and students needing special education services.
- 2 One technique would be to use “value-added” analysis to compare an individual student’s performance year-to-year on the Stanford-9 tests. See box on pg. 42, “Stanford Achievement Test-9th Edition” for more information.
- 3 Data from DCPS Division of Accountability.
- 4 We were unable to obtain reliable demographic characteristics for students attending charter schools under the jurisdiction of the D.C. Public Charter School Board.
- 5 Disaggregating data by student demographic group gives important information about average group performance, however such analysis remains limited in its ability to account for variations within that group. It’s also important to note that standardized tests are only one way to measure achievement and that norm-referenced tests such as the Stanford-9 compare student performance to a nationally representative sample instead of to specific performance standards.
- 6 Economically disadvantaged students are those who are eligible for free or reduced priced lunch based on low family income.
- 7 U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Trial Urban District Assessment Snapshot Reports* (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics): 2004. Available online at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>.
- 8 U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *The Nation’s Report Card: Trial Urban District Assessment Reading Highlights 2003* (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics): 2004. Available online at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>.
- 9 U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Trial Urban District Assessment Snapshot Reports* (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics): 2004. Available online at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>.
- 10 U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *The Nation’s Report Card: Trial Urban District Assessment Reading Highlights 2003* (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics): 2004. Available online at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>.
- 11 The Education Trust, *Closing the Achievement Gap: 2003 NAEP Reading and Math Results Show Real Results and Remaining Challenges* (Washington, D.C.: The Education Trust): November 2003.
- 12 Ibid.
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- 14 Virginia Department of Education, *Virginia Statewide Adequate Yearly Progress for 2002–03* (Richmond, Va.): February 2004. Available online at: <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/src/vasrc-ayp.pdf>.
- 15 Mui, Ylan Q., “Md. Plans to Ease Requirements of ‘No Child’ Law” *The Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.): April 8, 2004. Available online at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A58047-2004Apr7.html>
- 16 Raw data from DCPS Division of Accountability, analyzed by the D.C. State Education Office. Figure represents the percentage of grade 3–8 students taking the Stanford-9 test who scored at the 40th percentile (equivalent to a 44.7 NCE score) or higher. The initial city goals for the percent of students who must achieve proficiency were based on the scores of students performing in the lowest 20 percent of students in the city. Percentage proficient represents the percentage of all students at DCPS and public charter schools who took the Stanford-9 tests. Note that the recently released DCPS AYP Report Cards include students who are enrolled, but failed to take the test, as not proficient.
- 17 Raw data from DCPS Division of Educational Accountability, analyzed by the D.C. State Education Office. Figure represents the percentage of grade 9–11 students taking the Stanford-9 test who scored at the 40th percentile (equivalent to a 44.7 NCE score) or higher.
- 18 District of Columbia Public Schools, *DC Public Schools’ SAT Results Show Increases in Verbal Scores, While Math Remains Unchanged*, (Washington, D.C.: District of Columbia Public Schools Office of Communications and Public Information): August 26, 2003. Data unavailable on performance by students enrolled in District charter or private schools.
- 19 DCPS Office of Talent Development and Advanced Placement communication with D.C. State Education Office, *Highlights – Advanced Placement Trends, D.C. Public Schools 2003*.
- 20 DCPS Office of Accountability communication with the State Education Office, *DCPS Advanced Placement Exam Results*, 2003.
- 21 Sum, A. & Taggart, R. with McLaughlin, J., Pond, N., & Khatiwada, I, *The National Economic Downturn and Deteriorating Youth Employment Prospects: The Case for a Young Adult Jobs Stimulus Program* (Boston, Mass.: Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University): November 2001. Available online at: http://www.nupr.neu.edu/02-02/youth_pa.PDF
- 22 Moncarz, R. & Reaser, A. (2002), “The 2000–01 Job Outlook in Brief,” *Occupational Outlook Quarterly* v.46 n. 1. Available online at: <http://www.bls.gov/opub/ooq/2002/spring/oochart.pdf>
- 23 U.S. Census Bureau, “Detailed Tables P149A-I. Armed Forces Status by School Enrollment by Educational Attainment by Employment Status for the Population 16 to 19 Years”, *Census 2000 Summary File 3* (Washington, D.C., U.S. Census Bureau). Available online at: <http://factfinder.census.gov>
- 24 Ruiz-de-Valasco, Jorge, PhD “Education” in *The State of Latinos in the District of Columbia: Trends, Consequences, and Recommendations* (Washington, D.C.: Council of Latino Agencies): September 2002. Available online at: <http://www.consejo.org/publications.html>.
- 25 Swanson, Christopher B., *Who Graduates? Who Doesn’t? A Statistical Portrait of Public High School Graduation, Class of 2001* (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Education Policy Center): February 2004. Available online at: <http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=410934> The estimate only includes students obtaining a regular high school diploma, not a General Educational Development degree (GED) or other equivalency degrees. A similar study using different methods, conducted by the Manhattan Institute, estimated that in 2001 only 63 percent of students who started high school in DCPS four years earlier graduated with a full diploma. The authors calculated a national graduation rate of 70 percent using this method, with the District falling behind 45 states. See Green, Jay P., PhD and Forster, Greg, PhD, *Public High School Graduation and College Readiness Rates in the United States, Education Working Paper No. 3* (New York, N.Y., The Manhattan Institute for Policy Research): September 2003. Available online at: http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/cwp_03.htm
- 26 Archer, Jeff, “Houston Case Offers Lesson on Dropouts” *Education Week*, Sept. 24, 2003. Available online at: <http://www.edweek.org/ew/story.cfm?slug=04Houston.h23>
- 27 Mortenson, Tom, “College Participation Rates for Students from Low Income Families by State 1992–93 to 2000–02” *Postsecondary Education Opportunity*, n. 132 (Oskaloosa, Ia.: The Mortenson Research Seminar on Public Policy): June 2003. Available online at: <http://www.postsecondary.org/archives/Reports/Spreadsheets/ParticLowIncome.htm>
- 28 Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, *Closing the Graduation Gap: Toward High Schools That Prepare All Students for College, Work, and Citizenship* (Seattle, Wash.: Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation): March 2003. Available online at: <http://gates-foundation.org/nr/downloads/ed/policy.pdf>
- 29 Compiled by Georgia Arrington Booker, Director, Division of Guidance and Counseling Services, DCPS Office of the Chief Academic Officer. Note that graduating students are surveyed by high school guidance counselors in the spring of each school year, thus data is not collected from the 15 percent of students enrolled in the fall who do not graduate in the spring. Those students typically repeat their senior year, take additional coursework over the summer in order to graduate, or drop out of school. The survey does not include students who graduate over the summer or during the first semester. Eastern High School did not report survey results for spring 2003.
- 30 Williams, Mayor Anthony, “Maintaining a Level Playing Field for D.C. Graduates: Reauthorization of the D.C. College Access Act” *Statement of Anthony A. Williams, Mayor, District of Columbia before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Government Reform*, March 24, 2004. Available online at: <http://reform.house.gov/Uploaded-Files/Anthony%20Williams%20Testimony.pdf>.



CHAPTER FIVE

financing our schools





District residents in fiscal 2004 will spend approximately \$913 million in local funds for the operating costs of educating the city's public school children. This is slightly more than 22 percent of the total general fund budget of the District of Columbia.

Like other cities or states in the United States, the District of Columbia spends public money to support K-12 public education. While it is important to know the amount of money spent, it is equally important to know what the money is used for and who makes the decisions about how the money is to be spent.

Exhibit 25. Sources of Revenue for Public Elementary and Secondary Education in the District of Columbia, FY 2001 – FY 2003

About 80 percent of the operating costs of schools in the District are paid from local tax revenues. The other 20 percent comes either directly or indirectly from the federal government.

	Percent of total		
	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003
Local	79.1	81.8	80.4
Nonlocal	20.9	18.2	19.6

Data Source: Comprehensive Financial Reports: 2001–03, Office of the Chief Financial Officer, Government of the District of Columbia (Slight adjustments have been made to ensure year to year consistency.)

The abbreviation FY used in this and other exhibits in this chapter stands for "fiscal year." In the District of Columbia, a fiscal year is the budget year, which begins on October 1 of one calendar year and ends on September 30 of the next.

This chapter discusses the sources and levels of funding for the District's public schools, both the DCPS and public charter schools, how funding levels are determined, how the money is distributed to schools, and how the funds are spent. It examines trends in funding levels over the past several years and how they compare to education spending nationally, in other school districts in the D.C. metropolitan area, and in other similar urban school districts. In addition, this chapter briefly explores an approach to determining the adequacy of current funding for education in the District of Columbia.

Revenue Sources

Revenues for public education in the District of Columbia come from two main sources: D.C. taxes and nonlocal funds, including federal grants. Local tax dollars provide by far the largest portion of funding for DCPS and public charter schools. Exhibit 25 traces the local and nonlocal revenue shares from fiscal year 2001 to 2003.

Nonlocal revenues are of two types. One source of nonlocal revenue is federal grant funds that are provided both to DCPS and public charter schools as direct support for specific aspects of their educational programs. The second source of nonlocal revenue is known as intradistrict funds. Most intradistrict funds for public schools also originate from federal government sources but are provided to and administered by a designated agency or office in the District government, which redistributes the funds to public schools according to federal and local guidelines. Two main sources of intradistrict revenue available to public schools are the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition program and federal funds designated for reimbursement of Medicaid-eligible costs incurred by schools.

Published reports show that the nonlocal share of funding for public education in the District of Columbia decreased from 20.9 percent in fiscal 2001 to 19.6 percent in fiscal

2003 (See Exhibit 25). Notwithstanding, the percent of nonlocal funding from federal sources received by the District of Columbia since 2000 is higher than that reported for any of the 50 states.

The District receives two types of federal grants for elementary and secondary education: formula grants and competitive grants. Formula grants, which constitute the bulk of direct federal funding for public education current expenditures, are sometimes called “entitlements” because states and school districts do not have to compete for them. In general, formula grants are distributed based on the number of students from low-income families.

Two federally mandated formula grant programs provide the largest share of federal funding to states and local school districts for purposes related to instruction. One of these federally mandated education programs is legislated by the No Child Left Behind Act, or NCLB, the current name for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that was first passed in 1965. This program provides federal funding to states and local school districts to help pay the cost of programs aimed at improving the performance of disadvantaged students. NCLB funds are targeted at schools serving concentrations of students from low-income families. NCLB also requires states and local school districts 1) to regularly test all students for results, 2) to hold low-performing schools accountable, and 3) to provide parents of

students in failing schools an opportunity to enroll their child in a higher-performing one.

The other large federally mandated program is legislated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and is commonly referred to as special education. IDEA requires that states and local school districts adopt goals, policies, programs, and practices that ensure full educational opportunities for students with disabilities.

Federal funds also support certain competitive grant programs with education priorities that change over time. Both the DCPS and public charter schools are eligible to compete for these grants.

Federal funding for elementary and secondary education is paid to the District of Columbia Public Schools, which acts as the State Education Agency for K-12 education in the District. The DCPS then distributes a proportionate share of the funding to each eligible public charter school.

Expenditure Levels and Trends

During the past several years, funding for public elementary and secondary education has increased significantly. Per pupil funding for public schools in the District decreased for three successive years from 1995 to 1997. However, by fiscal 1999 per pupil expenditures for public education had recovered to their fiscal 1994 levels, based on calculations using 2003 inflation-adjusted dollars. **In the four years from 1999 to 2003, funding from local tax dollars**

Formula Funding Ensures Fair Funding Levels for Public Schools in the District of Columbia

There are three formulas used to determine how much public money goes to support the current operating costs of public schools in the District.

First, the U.S. Department of Education provides formula grants to public schools in the District to help them improve the performance of students from low-income families. In the District of Columbia, the key factor used to determine the funding level for federal formula grants is the number and percent of students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.

Second, the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula is used to determine the amount of D.C. appropriated funds needed to

support the current operating costs of the District of Columbia Public School system and of each public charter school.

The formula is designed to provide a uniform level of funding both to DCPS and the public charter schools and takes into consideration the number of students served, their grade levels, and any special needs they may have, such as special education, English language learning, or summer school.

Third, the DCPS uses its own formula, known as the Weighted Student Formula, to redistribute to each DCPS school its share of the funding provided to the school district by the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula.

The concept of average per-pupil expenditure offers a good way to compare the amount spent by schools, districts, and states for education, but the term also can cause confusion.

Average per-pupil expenditures can be defined and calculated in several different ways. Therefore, it is important to be sure that similar calculation procedures have been used before making comparisons or accepting comparisons made by others, especially when the reported per pupil expenditures seem unusually high.

For example, the definition of per-pupil expenditures can vary depending on how the number of students is calculated. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) calculates the number of students in two ways and provides much of its per-pupil data in both ways in order to fit the needs of different users. When NCES uses “per-pupil expenditures by enrollment,” it means calculations have been done using the number of students enrolled at a given time. But when NCES uses “per-pupil

expenditures by weighted average daily attendance” it means calculations were done using the average number of students actually attending school each day during the school year.

Average daily attendance is always a smaller number than enrollment because there are always fewer students in school than are on the roster. This means that the average per-pupil expenditure always will appear greater when calculated using average daily attendance figures than when using total enrollment figures.

The definition of per-pupil expenditures also can vary depending on the elements included in the expenditures. For example, the term “total expenditures” usually means the total of both operating expenditures and capital expenditures, while the term “current expenditures” means current operating expenditures.

In this report, “current expenditures per pupil” means current operating expenditures per pupil as determined using fall enrollment figures.

Exhibit 26: Total Current Operating Expenditures From Local and Nonlocal Funds for DCPS and Public Charter Schools, FY 1999–2004 (dollars in thousands)

Spending for the operation of public elementary and secondary schools in the District of Columbia has been rising steadily and dramatically over the past five years.

	FY 1999	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004 (est)
DCPS from Uniform Funding Formula	451.4	488.8	553.5	548.7	538.3	594.6
DCPS State Level	103.8	107.9	174.1	190.9	188.9	174.8
Charter Schools from Funding Formula	24.9	49.9	97.8	99.1	114.2	143.7
Total Expenditures from Local Appropriations	580.1	646.6	825.4	838.7	841.4	913.1
Nonlocal Budgeted Expenditures	107.9	110.3	152.6	178.6	156.1	167.5
Total Operating Expenditures (Local and Nonlocal)	698	756.9	978	1,017	997.5	1,080.6

Data Sources: DCPS expenditure totals from Uniform Per Student Funding Formula Funds and from funds budgeted or state-level functions were provided by Mary Levy, Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights.

Public Charter School spending levels represent the annual amounts paid out to all charter schools based on the provisions of the Uniform Funding Formula.

Nonlocal expenditures are the federal funding totals that appear in the annual Proposed Budget and Financial Plan published each year by the Government of the District of Columbia.

for current operating expenditures for public elementary and secondary education in the District of Columbia increased by 31 percent, from \$580 million in 1999 to approximately \$841 million in 2003 (see Exhibit 26). Over the same period, the total enrollment in public schools in the District increased less than 1 percent, while the enrollment in DCPS

decreased 9.2 percent.

During the same time period, nonlocal funding, including federal grants and intradistrict funding, has increased by 45 percent, from \$107.9 million in fiscal 1999 to \$156.1 million in 2003. Total funding for public school current operating expenditures in the District of Columbia is expected to exceed \$1 billion in fiscal year 2004.

An examination of current per-pupil expenditures over a 30-year period (1970–2000), adjusted for inflation, reveals a dramatic increase in expenditure levels nationally for elementary and secondary education. However, the national adjusted 30-year increase of 105 percent is greatly exceeded by a 138 percent increase in current per-pupil expenditures in the District of Columbia over the same period of time (See Exhibit 27).

One explanation of this difference in expenditure levels has to do with the dramatic increase in the percent of students with special needs and the high cost per student for the delivery of specialized services in the District of Columbia compared with costs nationwide. For example, in the 1989–90 school year, 7.8 percent of students enrolled in the DCPS received special education services, while in 1999–2000, 15.3 percent of students qualified.¹ Similarly, in

1989–90, 4.6 percent of DCPS students qualified as English language learners, while in 1999–2000, 8.4 percent of DCPS students qualified.²

Per-Pupil Expenditure Comparisons

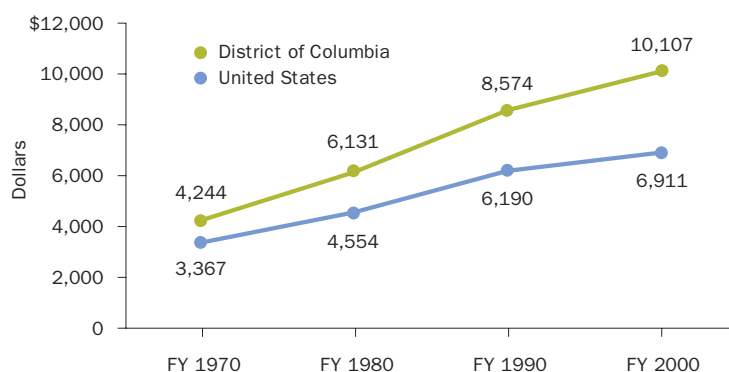
The District of Columbia ranks high nationally and with its neighboring districts in annual per-pupil expenditures for public elementary and secondary education. **In the 2000–01 school year, the District of Columbia spent an average of \$10,852 per pupil on current operating expenditures, ranking third when compared with the 50 states and fifth among the nation’s 100 largest school districts.**

The District’s current per-pupil spending tends to be most comparable to that of similar inner city school districts, particularly those in the Northeast where the higher cost of living tends to drive up the cost of services. Exhibit 28 compares average per-pupil current expenditures in the District of Columbia with spending in four urban school districts of similar size and student needs. With the exception of Baltimore City, which was included because it is a regional neighbor, all the school districts participated in the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA), which was carried out by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Chapter 4 of this report details how District students scored on these national reading and mathematics tests.

Exhibit 29 shows how the DCPS fiscal 2003 operating expenditures compared with those of other school systems in the D.C. metropolitan area. In Virginia, Arlington County and the city of Alexandria spent substantially more per student than the DCPS, while Montgomery County, MD, and Fairfax County, VA, spent slightly less. However, when expenditures from federal funds were removed from the calculations, the DCPS per-student operating expenditure level fell by about \$1,500, slightly below

Exhibit 27: Current Per-Pupil Expenditure: 1970–2000 (in constant 2000 dollars)

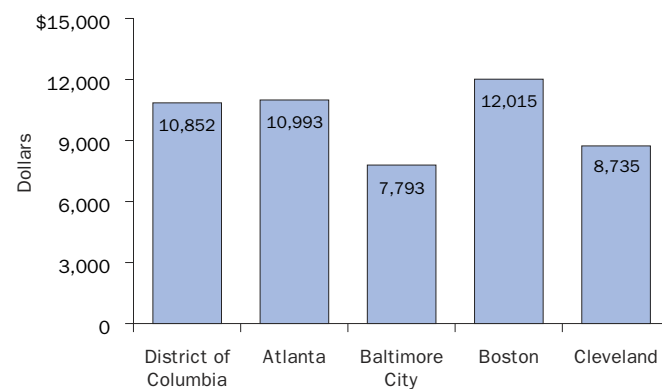
Even when adjusted for inflation, current expenditures per pupil have doubled nationally over the past three decades. In the District, adjusted dollar spending rates have increased even more rapidly.



Data Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics, 2002.

Exhibit 28: Current Per-Pupil Expenditure for the District of Columbia and Similar Jurisdictions, SY 2000–01

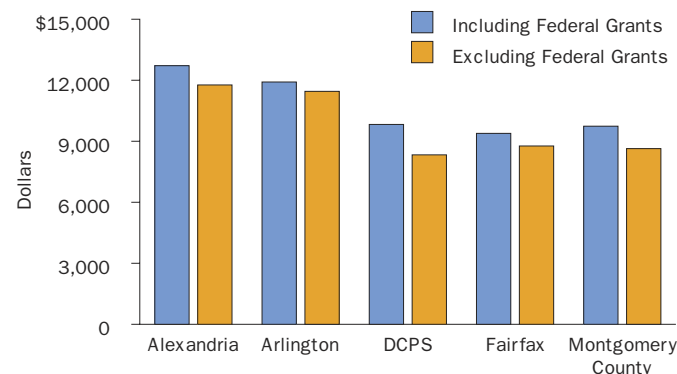
The District ranks high in current expenditures per pupil when compared with cities of similar size and student needs.



Data Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics, 2002.

Exhibit 29: Budgeted Current Per-Pupil Expenditures for D.C. Metropolitan Area School Districts; FY 2003

Federal grant funds help DCPS compete with the spending power of metropolitan area school districts.



Data Source: D.C. Public School Funding: Myth and Reality, A Parents United for the D.C. Public Schools Report, prepared by Mary Levy.

A **current operating budget** includes all costs that must be paid during the current budget period. An operating budget may be organized solely around line items, with expenditure categories, such as personnel costs and non-personnel costs. An operating budget may be further organized to show what is to be spent for certain functions, such as instruction and central administration, or to show what is to be spent for certain programs, such as special education, testing and accountability, or athletics.

The current operating budget for the District of Columbia Public Schools is divided into two parts, 1) a local budget which includes the costs of all direct educational services provided by DCPS and 2) a state-level budget which includes

such districtwide responsibilities as tuition for students placed in special education schools or programs that are not operated by DCPS, transportation for special education students and certain other city-wide public education costs not related to the operation of DCPS or public charter schools.

A **capital budget** consists of items whose costs must be spread over more than a single year. This includes such items as facilities purchase, construction, or renovation and major equipment purchase. The government of the District of Columbia maintains a six-year capital budget.

This chapter on “Financing Our Schools” examines issues related to current operating budgets but does not address capital expenditures.

the Montgomery and Fairfax county levels. Information about public charter schools was not included in this analysis.

Spending Patterns

Student instruction accounts for the largest portion of expenditures for both DCPS and public charter schools.

The following analysis of FY 2003 budgeted operating expenditures for DCPS, a sample of 14 public charter schools, and four suburban DC metropolitan area school districts breaks those operating costs down into three categories: school instruction, including central and school level services needed to support instruction; school facilities, including school maintenance, custodial services, utilities, and security; and

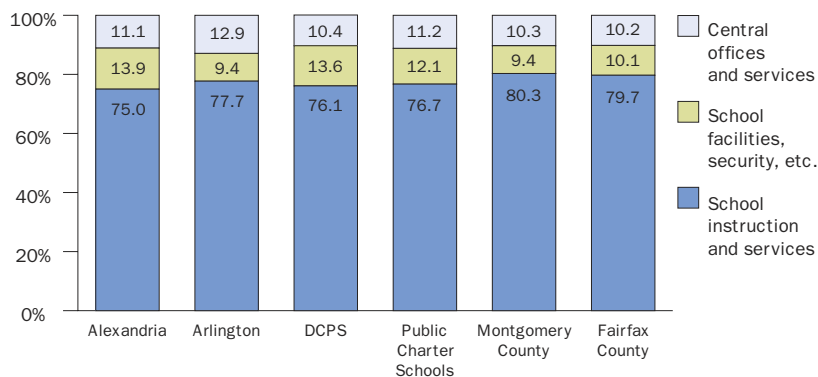
central offices and services. Exhibit 30 shows for each of the three functional categories the percent of operating costs budgeted by each of the five metropolitan area school districts and by a sample of 14 charter schools.

All five school districts, as well as the charter schools, budgeted the largest share of their operating funds for school instruction and related services. Although differences were not large enough to be significant, it is worth noting that both the DCPS and the sample of public charter schools budgeted a slightly smaller portion of their operating funds on instruction-related costs than did all but one of the neighboring suburban school districts. The DCPS, however, budgeted significantly less for central administration (16 percent less) and significantly more for facilities (27 percent more) than the average of the neighboring suburban school districts. The portion of funds budgeted for central administrative costs by the sample of charter schools varied little from the comparison schools. However, charter schools tended to budget somewhat more than the comparison schools, but less than DCPS, for facilities costs.

The public charter schools whose budgets were used by the State Education Office for this analysis were those chartered by the Board of Education’s chartering authority. The sample was limited to these schools because the budget format used by the Board’s chartering authority contained the categories needed for the type of analysis that was done.

Exhibit 30: Dollars Per Pupil for Budgeted Expenditures by Function, DCPS and Metropolitan Area School Districts, FY 2003

Spending patterns are remarkably similar among neighboring metropolitan areas. Nevertheless, small differences reveal spending priorities.



Note: Some percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.
Data Source: D.C. Public School Funding: Myth and Reality, A Parents United for the D.C. Public Schools Report, prepared by Mary Levy

Factors that Affect the Cost of Education

A number of conditions and special circumstances drive up the cost of public education in the District of Columbia. For example, the District must be able to compete with its neighbors for high-quality teachers and other staff for its schools. The District historically trails its suburban neighbors in teacher salary levels. However, recent salary increases have made salaries in public schools in the District of Columbia more competitive.

But teachers face a tough challenge in the District's schools. Public opinion tends to be critical of the city's public schools and those who work there. In addition, the special needs of many students are acute. Sixty-five percent of students in the public schools in the District qualify for free or reduced-price lunch and, based on the audit of the 2003–04 school year fall enrollment count, approximately 15.6 percent are enrolled in special education, and 8.7 percent are entitled to services as limited- or non-English proficient students. It takes significant salary incentives to attract—and keep—experienced, highly qualified teachers in schools where they are likely to face both a tough educational challenge and, at times, difficult working conditions. Exhibit 31 shows how DCPS beginning and maximum salary levels compare with those of its suburban neighbors. Each public charter school establishes its own salary scales, but charter schools also must compete with neighboring schools in their efforts to recruit and retain top-quality teachers.

A high cost of living index in the D.C. metropolitan area results in increased cost for goods and services. This results in unrealistic comparisons of per-pupil expenditures between schools in the District of Columbia and schools in other parts of the nation with a lower price index. The higher the cost of living index in Exhibit 32, the less a school district is likely to get for what it spends.



Exhibit 31: Minimum and Maximum Annual Teacher and Principal Salaries in the District of Columbia Public Schools and Other Metropolitan Area

School System	Teacher Minimum	Salaries Maximum	Principal Minimum	Salaries Maximum
District of Columbia	\$38,325	\$75,366	\$81,461	\$102,603
Alexandria City	34,182	79,932	69,433	115,623
Arlington County	37,002	85,354	81,888	137,059
Fairfax County	35,813	80,851	62,292	118,924
Montgomery County	38,683	86,376	84,254	120,627

Data Source: Internet survey of suburban school districts, July 2003 and January 2004, conducted by Mary Levy.

Exhibit 32: Cost of Living Index for the District of Columbia and Selected Comparison Cities, Third Quarter, 2002

City	Cost Index
Atlanta	97.7
Baltimore	93.6
Boston	135.5
Cleveland	104.2
District of Columbia	133.2

Source: ACCRA, Composite Index, Cost of Living for Selected U.S. Cities, Third Quarter, 2002

Another cost factor for the District's public schools in recent years has been a pattern of uncontained expenditures for certain aspects of special education. This includes:

1) tuition payments for a large number of high-cost special education student placements, including residential placements, outside the D.C. public education system, scattered across the metropolitan area and

occasionally at significant distances from the District; 2) high costs due to inefficiencies in the transportation of special education students; 3) liability for plaintiffs' attorneys fees in the case of lawsuits or hearings that issue rulings adverse to the District; and 4) delayed or unrecovered reimbursements for Medicare-eligible services. The DCPS Special Education Program, in consultation with the Office of the Chief Financial Officer, has instituted a cost-savings plan and is making progress containing these expenditures.

Maintenance, custodial, and utilities costs for aging and underutilized school facilities also put pressure on the DCPS budget. Public charter schools, through the Uniform Funding Formula, receive a facilities allowance that is based on an average of recent annual DCPS actual facilities expenditures. Nevertheless, they face potentially high facilities costs. Another financial pressure faced both by DCPS and public charter schools is the growing cost of school security.

Some factors that increase costs, such as competitive teacher salaries, under the right conditions, can be used to improve performance. Similarly, while maintaining a low pupil-to-teacher ratio can be expensive, it can have a positive effect on student learning, particularly at early grade levels. The District of Columbia offers a smaller pupil-to-teacher ratio when compared with other states and with other urban school districts. The comparative small school size in the District, while not cost efficient, provides an opportunity to create in schools a greater sense of community to support student learning.

The Relationship Between Spending and Performance
Funding for public education in the District of Columbia does not carry with it specific expectations regarding student outcomes. Establishing and maintaining a connection between levels

and patterns of spending for schools and the achievement of desired student outcomes is not easy to do. Still, some states, including Ohio, New Hampshire, Wyoming, and Maryland, are trying hard to build those connections and are making progress.

In recent years, the courts of many states have ruled their state system for funding public education unconstitutional on the grounds that funding levels for public education are not "adequate" to provide the minimal quality of education and the level of student outcomes that reasonable citizens have a right to expect and that their state constitutions guarantee. Numerous states have undertaken efforts to meet the test of funding adequacy, either in response to a court ruling or in an effort to preempt judicial intervention.

The still-emerging concept of adequacy-based funding for schools has two main parts: 1) an accountability component that clearly spells out goals and expected student outcomes, establishes standards, and has the ability to measure performance and 2) a funding mechanism that matches spending levels and priorities to the achievement of performance goals.

The system currently used to determine the adequate level of funding for schools in the District of Columbia does not meet the test of this newer approach to adequacy-based funding. In the first place, there are not clear, publicly embraced goals for public education in the District of Columbia. Second, there is not the kind of accountability system needed to measure success in achieving stated goals and producing desired outcomes. And third, without systemwide goals and a related accountability system, there is no basis for calculating the costs and allocating the funds required to produce desired levels of student achievement.

In this chapter we have discussed: 1) the level of funding provided by the citizens of the District of Columbia for the education of their public schoolchildren, 2) the rates

The annual budget process for public education in the District of Columbia involves public education officials, District government leaders and lawmakers, and the U.S. Congress. Here are the most important steps in the process.

1. The **mayor**, working with the **Office of Budget and Planning (OBP)** establishes a funding mark for the District of Columbia Public Schools and the public charter schools.
2. The **Board of Trustees** of each public charter school uses its projected enrollment and the provisions of the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula, including the facilities allowance, which is equivalent to DCPS capital funding, to estimate its funding level and draft its budget for the coming year.
3. The **Board of Education** works with DCPS to prepare and justify its budget request. This includes the operating budget funded through the Uniform Funding Formula; the state-level portion of its operating budget, which is funded outside the formula; and its capital budget.
4. The **Board of Education's** budget submission goes to the **mayor** and the **Budget Office**.
5. The **Budget Office** reviews the budget request. Differences regarding the amount and adequacy of the request are negotiated.
6. The **mayor** submits his recommendation, along with that of the Board of Education, to the **Council of the District of Columbia**.
7. The **D.C. Council** enacts the annual budget request for public education (DCPS and public charter schools), with any changes it deems appropriate, for submission to the **U.S. Congress**.
8. The **Congress** appropriates the annual operating budget of the District of Columbia, including the budget for public education. **Congress** may exercise line item authority over the budget request.
9. The appropriated funds go to the **Board of Education** and the **public charter schools** to manage.

at which funding for public elementary and secondary education have increased in the past several years, 3) how per-pupil expenditures in the District of Columbia compare with neighboring districts and the nation as a whole, 4) what the money goes for and how those decisions are made, and 5) the conditions and special circumstances peculiar to the District that increase the costs of public education.

In the concluding chapter, we briefly summarize some of the existing strengths of

the District's system of public education that were suggested by many people who were interviewed by State Education Office staff or who participated in meetings that occurred during the planning and preparation of this report on the state of education in the District of Columbia. The chapter closes by inviting readers to use the information provided in the report as a resource when responding to challenges that face public schools in the District of Columbia.

If you want to learn more about financing our schools:

D.C. Public School Funding: Myth and Reality, A Parents United for the D.C. Public Schools Report prepared by Mary Levy

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Characteristics of the 100 Largest Public Elementary School Districts in the United States: 2000–01, NCES 2000—351, Washington DC 2002. This document may be downloaded without charge from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>.

U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau. Public Education Finances: 2001, Washington, D.C., March 2003. <http://census.gov/govs/www/schools>

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Digest of Education Statistics: 2002. This document may be downloaded without charge from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>.

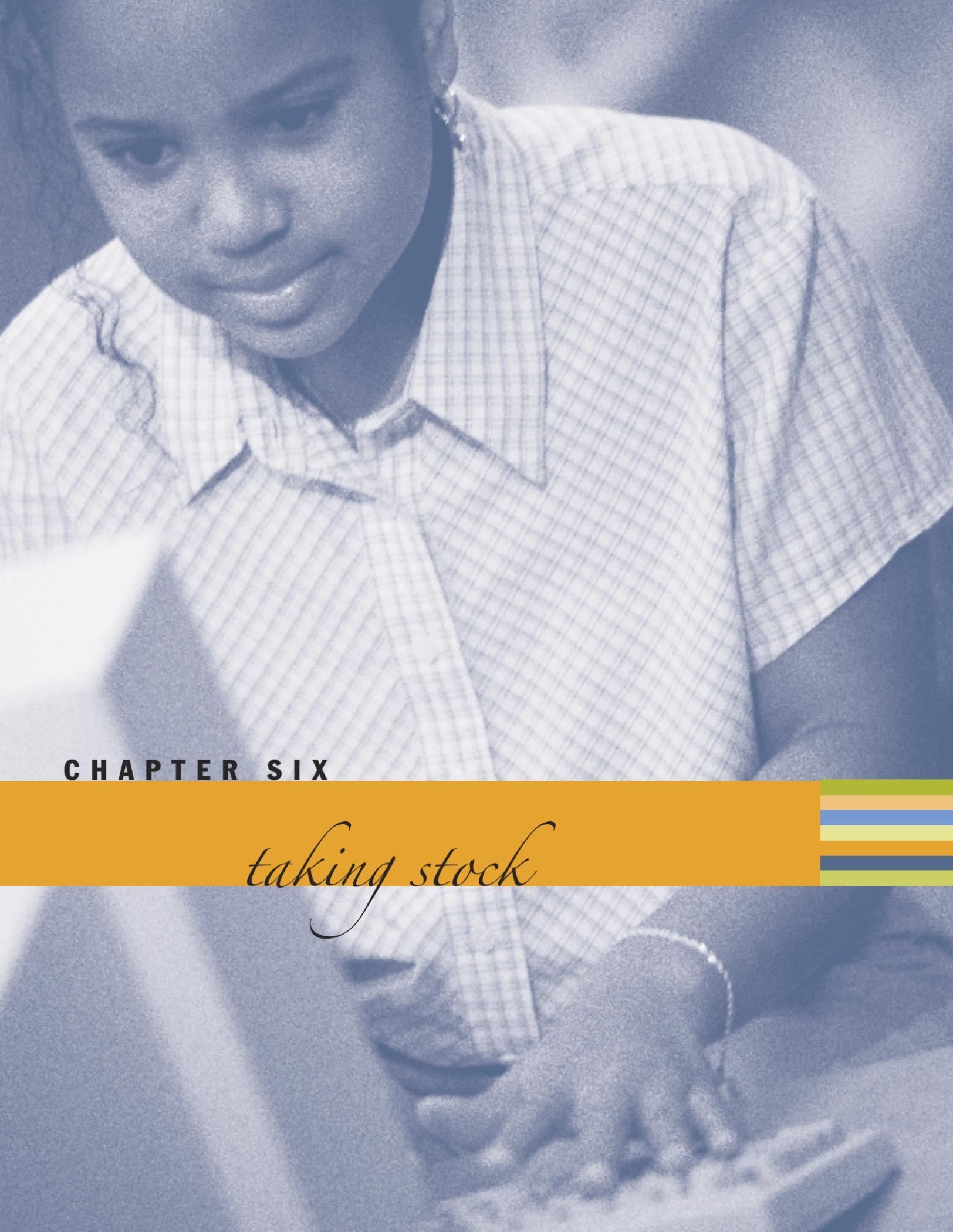
Government of the District of Columbia, Office of the Chief Financial Officer. Comprehensive Financial Reports: 2000–03

Current Trends in State Education Funding for Adequacy, Michelle Moser, Department of Public Administration, The George Washington University, August 2001. Prepared under contract with the State Education Agency.

Chapter Notes

1 Prepared by Mary Levy for Parents United for the D.C. Public Schools.

2 Ibid.

A young girl with dark hair, wearing a light-colored plaid shirt, is looking down at a computer keyboard. The image is in a blue-toned, slightly grainy style. A horizontal orange bar is positioned across the middle of the image, containing the chapter title. To the right of the orange bar, there are several horizontal stripes in green, blue, yellow, and dark blue.

CHAPTER SIX

taking stock

As part of the planning and preparation for this report, the staff of the State Education Office met with and interviewed many people who believe strongly in the need for such a report, who possess deep knowledge about education issues and practice, who can access needed data, or who have a special stake in the outcomes of the study. In nearly all of those interviews or meetings, staff members asked about the existing strengths and accomplishments of the District's public schools, as well as promising initiatives currently under way.

Some of those successes are described in story boxes within this report. The responses also have helped staff members confirm that there are a number of strengths that can have a positive effect on the whole system of public education in the District of Columbia. Some of the notable systemic strengths of public education in the District of Columbia follow:

1. Early Preparation. The District of Columbia is a national leader in providing publicly funded early opportunities for young children from poor families. This includes widely available early childhood education, prekindergarten for a large population of children, and universal full-day kindergarten.

2. Parents Can Choose. Parents in the District have extraordinary opportunities to select their child's school. Parents have a within-boundary guarantee of a seat in their neighborhood school and a lenient process for handling out-of-boundary requests. DCPS operates a number of specialty schools, there is a large and growing selection of public charter schools, and publicly funded scholarships to private and parochial schools soon will be available.

3. Advantageous Pupil-to-Teacher Ratio.

A favorable pupil-to-teacher ratio allows DCPS to have significantly smaller classes than the national average.

4. A Cadre of Successful Schools.

A number of high-poverty schools are demonstrating how also to be high-performing schools.

5. Postsecondary Attainment.

Work is under way through the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) in five D.C. schools to provide the support services students need for high academic achievement. GEAR UP's goal is to change student and parent aspirations for academic success and preparation for further education.

6. Postsecondary Access.

Residents who graduate from school in the District of Columbia have an assurance of financial assistance for college through the Tuition Assistance Grant program (TAG). Knowledge that financial assistance is likely to be available can be used to encourage students to raise their aspirations and seriously prepare for college.

7. Funding Follows Students.

Through the Uniform Student Formula and the Weighted Student Formula, dollars follow students and are aligned with student needs to a degree not common in other urban school districts.

This report is intended to provide a baseline for systematic public reporting. It is our hope that it also can become a resource in the public discussion and action that will be needed to address the challenges and build on the strengths of public education in the District of Columbia.

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